

2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

Satsangs on Ramacharitamanas

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Satsangs on Ramacharitamanas



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013
GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA
23rd–27th October 2013

Satsangs on Ramacharitamanas

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Compiled from satsangs of Swami Satyananda Saraswati,
given at Rikhiapeeth from 1994 to 2001.*

Extracted from Bhakti Yoga Sagar, Volumes 1–7



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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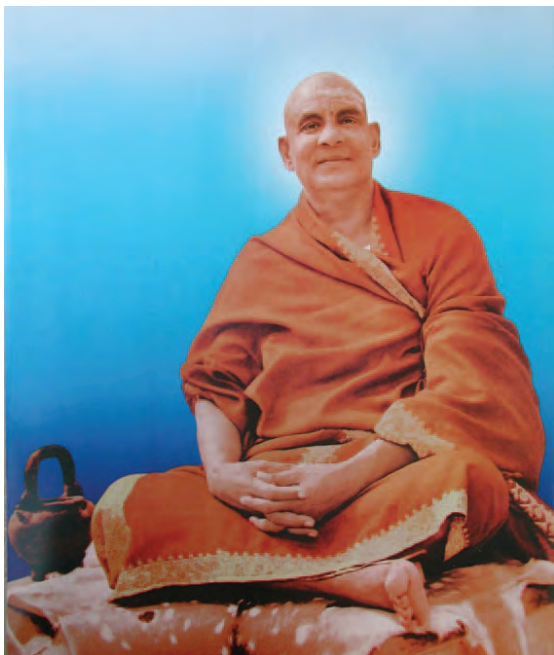
Printed by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2013

ISBN: 978-93-81620-64-9

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.rikhiapeeth.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

Contents

	Introduction	1
1	History and Story	5
2	The Actors	21
3	God – With or Without Form	42
4	Bhakti	61
5	Relationships with God	81
6	Satsang, Faith and Surrender	102
7	Life, Pain and Society	123
8	Mind Management	144
9	God's Will and Grace	167
10	Song Divine	185



This book is published in memory of
Swami Satyasankalpananda Saraswati
Alice Springs, Australia (1951–2011)

who compiled this volume with the hope of making the spiritual wealth of the *Ramacharitamanas* known to all seekers. Inspired by her guru, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the last twenty years of Swami Satysankalpa's life were devoted to chanting, reading and sharing the *Ramacharitamanas*. This work lives as a monument for all to imbibe the essence of Sri Swami Satyananda's experience with the ancient epic.

Introduction

Ramacharitamanas came into this dry life with the sweetness of nectar.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Ramacharitamanas was composed by Tulsidas in the sixteenth century in a rural Hindi dialect, rather than in the language of sophisticated people. While drawing on the *Ramayana*, the ancient Sanskrit epic composed by Valmiki, which describes Rama as a human being, Tulsidas describes Rama as a god. The *Ramacharitamanas* is a purely spiritual book, which was not intended just to tell the history of Rama, but to instil devotion to God into people's hearts. The foundation of every aspect of life of the Indian people can be found in this epic, which is chanted by devotees throughout India.

Such was the importance that Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati devoted many years to the chanting of the *Ramacharitamanas*. Chanting became the daily sadhana of the ashram in Rikhiapeeth, Jharkhand, for the residents and guests. "I have read the *Ramacharitamanas* so many times. If you want to know how many times, I would have to consult my diary. I used to sit at midnight and finish it the next day at four in the morning. I would rest for one day then begin reading the whole book from beginning to end again. In bhakti it is necessary to detach the mind from the world and attach it to God."

Through this intense involvement Sri Swami Satyananda discovered his personal relationship with God and thus the fulfilment of spiritual life. “After thoroughly studying the Vedas, Upanishads, Bible, Koran and many other spiritual books, I stopped my reading with *Ramacharitamanas*. This one book paved the way in my life. It took me out of the gravitational force of mind and intellect, and now it is the only book I read.”

The satsangs of the present compilation, spanning the period from 1994 to 2001, were first published in the series *Bhakti Yoga Sagar*, Volumes 1–7. These books contain Sri Swami Satyananda’s satsangs during the annual Sat Chandi Mahayajna held at Rikhiapeeth. The present excerpts on the *Ramacharitamanas* are taken from those discourses given during the period of Sri Swami Satyananda’s immersion in the world of the *Ramacharitamanas*.

As such this compilation is not a commentary on the story from beginning to end, nor a discussion on philosophy. It describes aspects of the *Ramacharitamanas* that a seer has drawn through his personal reading and experience, opening the door, in a simple way, into the heart and spirit of this profound epic.

Each sutra, or aphorism, elucidates a truth and those which are included here guide and inspire the reader towards a feeling and understanding on a deeper level. Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati understood the *shabar mantras*, the subtle mantras interwoven through the main text, that an ordinary reader would not know of. These hidden mantras are like locks to a transcendental experience which Sri Swami Satyananda conveys through his feeling and insight.

The selection of satsangs compiled in this volume introduce the many topics dealt with in the epic: its history and plot, the question of God with or without form, faith, devotion and surrender, life and suffering, grace and the power of the divine name. The ancient wisdom is elucidated in a modern language and style so that the present-day reader is able to relate to it easily.

Sri Swami Satyananda understood the need of people for spiritual guidance and inspiration. He had found both in the epic. His desire to communicate his love and understanding can be felt in every word of these satsangs. “*Ramacharitamanas* deals with life, its conflicts, frustrations and disappointments from birth to death. It gives the complete idea of the timetable of life. It is a commentary on faith and the most powerful tonic for generating bhakti.”



Please note the following abbreviations used in the book:

BK	Balakanda	SK	Sundarakanda
AYK	Ayodhyakanda	LK	Lankakanda
ARK	Aranyakanda	UK	Uttarakanda
KK	Kishkindhakanda		

Anything not specified as *do*, *so*, *cham*, or *sloka*, is chanted as a *caupai*.

1

History and Story

Who wrote *Ramacharitamanas*? They say there were a number of learned people like Tulsidas in the world, great Sanskrit scholars, but nobody could wield such a pen. How could Tulsidas compose such a great epic of the stature of the *Ramacharitamanas*? Maybe sitting inside Tulsidas' human frame was *paramatma*, the supreme soul, or *divyashakti*, the divine power, or Goddess Saraswati, and He or She dictated the epic using Tulsidas as an instrument. I too was made an instrument by that divine power in order to write so many books on yoga and tantra. Works of eternal value are called *shruti*, revealed truth. The Vedas are shruti, a revelation. The Muslims treat the Koran as shruti. Shruti means the voice of God.

Garuda and Kakabhushundi

In *Ramacharitamanas* there is a story about Garuda, the eagle bird. Garuda was in doubt about the nature of God, so he went to Brahma, the creator, then to Vishnu, the preserver, then to Shiva, the destroyer. Shiva told him, "Look, I don't have time to answer your questions, I am very busy. Go to Kakabhushundi and he will dispel your doubts." Garuda was directed to listen to the story of Rama from Kakabhushundi, who was a crow. The interesting point to note is that Garuda is the king of birds and the crow is a scavenger. This story is like the butler instructing the master or lord of the house. So Kakabhushundi told Garuda the story of Rama.

It has been said that whenever the Lord takes birth, Kakabhushundi comes to observe the infant form of God. It is a very beautiful story. In reality *Ramacharitamanas* begins with this story. The satsang by Kakabhushundi is incomparable. He tells his whole life story and the story of his past lives. He used to sit with Sage Lomasha and discuss the manifest and the unmanifest. Kakabhushundi became a crow due to a curse. The point revolves on whether God has a form or not. Is God only abstract? Is God just formless? It means you are confining God to formlessness. After all, formlessness is also a limitation, a confinement. When you are able to describe God, then He is describable. If God is indescribable then whatever you describe Him as is just one aspect. God is formless and God has a form.

Shiva and Parvati

I have stopped reading books. I have discarded, or rather returned, every kind of book, and I have decided that the only book that I will read now is the story of Sri Rama by Tulsidas. As I read, I find many good ideas for myself. Not knowledge, I am not talking about knowledge, but the story is nice. I will tell you how it begins.

After Lord Shiva married Parvati, they came back to Kailash. One day, while Shiva was sitting under a banyan tree, Parvati sat beside him and said, “I have heard that God is nameless, formless and fearless. You always take the name of Rama. You worship Rama, but he was the son of a king. His wife was abducted by Ravana, the demon king, and then Rama fought Ravana. All this confuses me. Can you explain it to me?”

*Rāmu so avadha nṛpati suta soī
Kī aja aguna alakha gati koī.*

do – *Jaum nṛpa tanaya ta brahma kimi nāri birahañ mati bhoṛi,
Dekhi carita mahimā sunata bhramati buddhi ati mori.*

*Jaum anītha byāpaka bibhu koū
Kahahu bujhāi nātha mohi soū,*

*Agya jāni risa ura jani dharahū
Jehi bidhi moha miṭai soi karahū.*

Is that the same Rama who is the son of the king of Ayodhya?
Or is he the one who is unborn,
Without attributes and invisible?
If he is the son of a king,
Whose intellect was deluded at the parting of his wife,
How can he be Brahman?
Pondering thus and hearing his glory,
My intellect puzzles very much
As to how he is desireless, all-pervading and eternal.
Tell me, my Lord, and make me understand it.
Knowing me to be ignorant, please do not be angry,
And do as you like to uproot my delusion.

(BK before and after *do* 108)

Lord Shiva smiled and said, “Parvati, you asked me this very same question in your previous life. What could I say about it? So, you went yourself to test Rama. At that time, he was in exile, roaming in the forest. His wife Sita had just been abducted by Ravana, and he was crying with anguish, because he loved her so much. You materialized yourself before him in the form of Sita. When Rama saw you he asked, “Oh wife of Shiva, why have you come here?”

*Jori pāni prabhu kīnha pranāmū
Pitā sameta līnha nīja nāmū,
Kaheu bahori kahāññ bṛṣaketū
Bipina akeli phirahu kehi hetu.*

Joining hands the Lord bowed down to her,
And told his name and the name of his father also.
After that he enquired about Lord Shiva
And also asked why she was roaming in the jungle alone.

(BK before *do* 53)

“When you looked at Rama, you had the vision of *Virat*, the cosmic Vishnu. Now, in this life, you are again asking me the same question.” Parvati said, “Yes, but now I am not asking out of doubt. I am asking because I want to know. At that time, I was very critical, but now I have no doubt about Lord Rama or the divinity of his incarnation. I just want to know how and why this happened. I no longer question your devotion to Rama. I know it is your life, but please explain all this to me.” Shiva said, “You are most fortunate, Parvati. I will now answer your question.” Then Shiva started narrating the life of Lord Rama, highlighting the glory of his name:

do – *Sabarī gīdha susevakani sugati dīnhi raghunātha,*
Nāma udhāre amita khala beda bidita guna gātha.

Rāma sukaṇṭha bibhīṣana doū
Rākhe sarana jāna sabu koū,
Nāma garība aneka nivāje
Loka beda bara birida birāje.

Rāma bhālu kapi kaṭaku baṭorā
Setu hetu śramu kīnha na thorā,
Nāmu leta bhavasindhu sukhāhīn
Karahu bicāru sujana mana māhīn.

Rāma sakula rana rāvanu mārā
Sīya sahita nija pura pagu dhārā,
Rājā rāmu avadha rajadhānī
Gāvata guna sura muni bara bānī.

Sevaka sumirata nāmu saprītī
Binu śrama prabala moha dalu jītī,
Phirata sanehañ magana sukha apanen
Nāma prasāda soca nahin sapanen.

do – *Brahma rāma ten nāmu bara bara dāyaka bara dāni,*
Rāmacarita sata koṭi mahañ liya mahesa jiyañ jāni.

Lord Rama liberated all his ardent devotees,
Such as Shabari and Jatayu, the vulture.

His name also liberated innumerable rascals.
 All these qualities and stories are known through the Vedas.
 It is known to all that Rama gave shelter
 To Sugriva and Vibhishana both,
 But His name also favoured many humble persons.
 His fine reputation is shining in the world
 As well as in the Vedas.
 Rama formed an army of bears and monkeys
 Who laboured hard to construct a bridge.
 But by taking His name, the ocean of the world is dried up.
 Think it over in your mind, O virtuous persons.
 In the battle, Rama killed Ravana,
 Along with all his family members
 Then He returned to His own place with Sita.
 Rama became king and Ayodhya His capital.
 The munis and gods sing His praise in beautiful verses.
 Remembering His name with love,
 His servants conquer without effort
 The most valiant army of delusion.
 They roam with pleasure, filled with His love,
 They have no anxiety, even in a dream,
 Due to the grace of the name.
 Name is superior to either the unmanifest Brahman
 Or the form of Rama, and has the power
 To bless even those who bless others.
 Lord Shiva knew this well when he chose it
 From among the thousand million attributes
 Of Rama in different ages.

(BK after *do* 24)

Shiva and Rama

Sati, the consort of Shiva, immolated herself in her previous birth when her faith in Lord Rama was weak and shaky and she was full of doubts. In her next birth she was reborn as Parvati Girija, with a heart full of unwavering devotion and faith in Rama. Thus she expressed a keen desire to hear the story of Sri Rama from her husband, Lord Shiva.

At that time Shankaraji uttered these memorable and beautiful words: *Sakalaloka jagapavani Ganga! Poochehu Raghupati katha prasanga!* “Are you asking for the story of Sri Raghupati, which is as purifying as the Ganga?” The Ganga purifies everything that comes in its way from Gangotri to Gangasagar, where it merges in the ocean. Just as the Ganga purifies everything through which it passes, so the story of Rama purifies the hearts and souls of everyone who reads it.

Shiva was very pleased to tell Parvati the story of Rama. He narrates the events from Rama’s birth, through to his student days under his guru Vasishtha. He describes how Rama killed the demon Tadaka, how he resurrected and redeemed Ahalya, and how he broke Shiva’s bow. He describes how Rama went into exile in the forest, where he killed the demons and served the rishis and munis. He narrates how Sita was abducted by Ravana, how Rama met Sugriva and how he crossed the ocean by building a bridge to Lanka, where Sita was kept captive by Ravana.

All the episodes and events in Rama’s divine incarnation purify the heart and soul of the reader. Rama’s name has its place, but by reading the story of his life, the heart is washed clean of all impurities and one attains the summum bonum of human endeavour.

Sati is supposed to be the better half of Shiva, but she made one blunder. She had a doubt about Lord Rama. She believed that Shiva was the supreme, the ultimate, the atman. So what was the need for Him to worship Rama, who was only a mortal prince? Not only that, Lord Rama was upset when Sita was kidnapped, and he roamed the forest, lamenting his misfortune. So, Sati asked her Lord, how can a person who exhibits such behaviour be an avatara, an incarnation?

do – *Brahma jo byāpaka biraja aja akala anīha abheda,*
Sou ki deha dhari hoi nara jāhi na jānata beda.

Biṣṇu jo sura hita naratanu dhārī
Sou sarbagya jathā tripurārī,

*Khojai so ki agya iva nārī
Gyānadhāma śrīpati asurārī.*

*Sambhugirā puni mṛṣā na hoī
Siva sarbagya jāna sabu koī,
Asa saṁsaya mana bhayau apārā
Hoi na hṛdayaṁ prabodha pracārā.*

Does that Brahman who is all-pervading
Unattached, unborn, desireless, indivisible,
Whom even the Vedas know not
Take form and become a man
For the sake of performing the works of the gods?
Is it not surprising that even Vishnu,
The Lord of Lakshmi and the enemy of demons,
Being originally the abode of true knowledge,
Searches for his wife like an ignorant person?
The words of Lord Shiva also cannot be untrue,
Because everyone knows that He is omniscient.
Thus the mind of Sati was filled with unlimited doubts
And there was no solace in her heart.

(BK after *do* 50)

Sati had to suffer, because she did not repose full faith in Lord Rama. It was a little slip, but even so, she had to suffer, and all of us have to suffer as well. When Sati started having this doubt, Lord Shiva had to forsake her.

*Satīm kīnha sītā kara beṣā
Siva ura bhayau biṣāda biseṣā,
Jaum aba karauṁ satī sana prītī
Miṭai bhagati pathu hoi anītī.*

do – *Parama punīta na jāi taji kieṁ prema baṛa pāpu.
Pragaṭi na kahata mahesu kachu hṛdayaṁ adhika santāpu.*

*Taba saṅkara prabhu pada siru nāvā
Sumirata rāmu hṛdayaṁ asa āvā,
Ehiṁ tana satihi bheṭa mohi nāhīm
Siva saṅkalpu kīnha mana māhīm.*

When Shiva knew that Sati had taken the form of Sita,
 He was very much distressed at heart.
 He thought within himself that
 If He continued to treat Sati as His wife,
 The path of devotion would be lost,
 And He would thus be committing a sin.
 Although Sati was very pure
 And should not be abandoned,
 Yet, it was a great sin to love her now.
 Lord Shiva did not say anything openly,
 But He felt much grief in His heart.
 Mentally, He bowed down to the feet of Lord Rama,
 And as soon as he remembered Rama,
 This idea flashed in His mind,
 That He would not meet Sati again
 In her present form.
 Thus Lord Shiva made a resolve
 To this effect in His heart.

(BK before and after *do* 56)

From that day, Lord Rama has been worshipped in Shiva's temples and vice versa. There has been a close bond between the followers of Shiva and Narayana. Why? Because there is no difference between the devotee and the Lord. If you are a genuine devotee, you will feel no difference between yourself and the Lord.

I have a very funny relationship with Sri Rama. I am a Shaiva sannyasin, although I don't wear geru because I belong to the paramahansa tradition. The form and colour of the dress does not matter in the case of paramahamsas. I can wear any clothes now. A sannyasin is a Shaiva, but right from childhood I had a great attraction for Sri Rama. So at the time of initiation from my guru I had difficulty in choosing a mantra. It was just like a man caught in a dilemma over two women, who to marry? But my guru managed it for me. He said, "Okay, Rama is your ishta devata and *Om Namah Shivaya* is your mantra."

This means when I am practising *Om Namah Shivaya*, I am concentrating on:

*Nīlāmbujaśyāmalakomalāṅgaṁ sītāsamāropitavāmabhāgam,
Pāṇau mahāsāyakacārucāpaṁ namāmi rāmaṁ raghuvaṁśanātham.*

I bow to Lord Rama, Lord of the Raghus,
Whose body is soft, blue like the lotus,
At whose side sits Sita,
And who holds the powerful bow and arrow in his hands.

(AYK sloka 3)

I have read the *Ramacharitamanas* of Tulsidas and the other Ramayanas: *Valmiki* and *Ananda Ramayana*. I think spiritual people who want to realize God should read *Ramacharitamanas*. I have done many anushthanas of *Ramacharitamanas*, *navanha parayan*, the entire *Ramayana* completed within nine days, and also in one day. During Navaratri I completed the entire *Ramayana* every day for nine days. I woke at midnight, took a bath and sat down to read the *Ramayana*. I started from the first sloka:

*Varṇānāmarthasaṅghānāṁ rasānāṁ chandasāmapi,
Maṅgalānāṁ ca karttārau vande vāṇīvināyakau.*

I offer my salutations to Saraswati and Ganesha,
The creators of sounds and their letters,
The meanings of words, poetic sentiments
And the begetters of all blessings.

(BK sloka 1)

I went right up to the end, completing it at four pm. I didn't eat, drink sleep or do anything else except *Ramayana* from twelve midnight till four pm, sixteen hours daily, for nine days. It is possible. When you give your total mind to spiritual life, when everything else becomes either secondary or useless, then it is not difficult.

I have heard that many people, especially those who have come from other countries, cannot understand the

Ramacharitamanas, but you must know that it is not necessary to understand the meaning. I have seen many of you start crying while listening to the reading and singing. Those who have read *Ramacharitamanas* will tell you that tears start rolling down the cheeks or one feels very hot just from reading it. You do not have to understand the meaning.

The language in which the *Ramacharitamanas* is written is not the urban language of sophisticated people, it is a rural dialect. The people of Jhansi, Gwalior and Chatarpur do not have to be told the meaning because that is their spoken language. The *Ramayana* is almost entirely in the Bundelkhandi language, which is the language they speak even today. The man who wrote it was also a very good Sanskrit scholar. You may call it simple, but its expression is so apt that it could not be expressed any better, even in Sanskrit.

The *Ramacharitamanas* composed by Tulsidas has created a bond of love between the devotees of Lord Shiva and Sri Rama. Before it was written there was bitter enmity between the two, like that between Hindus and Muslims today. Devotees of Shiva were not allowed to enter the temple of Tirupati and no Vishnu pooja could be performed in a Shiva temple. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas has contrived it in such a way that Shiva worships Sri Rama and Sri Rama worships Shiva. He has made them friends and mutual admirers, so then their respective devotees also become friends.

Now Rama is worshipped in the temple of Shiva and the temple of Rama has the shivalingam, so there is no clash, no difference. Something like this will have to be done to end the animosity between Hindus and Muslims. Parliament cannot solve this problem nor can a political leader, only a saint can do this. Nobody else can do anything about it. The government cannot solve problems of religion and religious communities. They can only be dissolved, resolved and solved by a saint.

The Badrinath temple in the Himalayas is a temple dedicated to Vishnu or Narayana, but the priest who performs

the worship is a Shaiva. Today in India there is no enmity between the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects. You are not surprised to see them harmonized, but when these traditions were pioneered, the relationship between the Shaivas and the Vaishnavas was like that between the Hindus and the Muslims. They thirsted for each other's blood, but not any longer.

Many stories

Now I only think about God. What is *sat*, *chit* and *anandam*, truth, consciousness and bliss? What is *satyam*, *shivam* and *sundaram*, truth, auspiciousness and beauty? What is nirakara and sakara? How does God incarnate? Does He incarnate? Why does He incarnate? All the answers I found in *Ramacharitamanas*. I don't read any other books, only *Ramacharitamanas*.

I try to understand Rama and Sita from the physical and also the spiritual point of view. Who is Ravana? Is he me? If that is so then both Rama and Ravana are two forces within me: Ravana, with ten heads, ten *indriyas* or senses, and Rama. Every sense, every *indriya*, has a negative and a positive aspect, which makes twenty. Then Sita is also here, so Rama and Sita are in me. That means there are two forces within me that are continuously interacting with each other. This is one point of view. I always think about these transcendental questions. I don't want to waste my time in finding the answer to questions like, how do I think? Who cares about it!

The whole *Ramayana*, including Sita and Rama's wedding, is the philosophy of the spiritual history of man. All the episodes: Rama's exile, the abduction of Sita, Sindhu Tarang, the burning of Lanka, the killing of Ravana, reflect the spiritual journey of the *jivatma*. The *Ramayana* is a reflection of the spiritual life of man from bondage to liberation. You may interpret the character of Sita as *jivatma* and Ravana as the representation of the ten *indriyas* and twenty *vrittis*. The *Ramayana* happens every day. Do not say that Rama never was. He is spiritual philosophy personified.

People first understand the esoteric meaning and then accept Sri Sita-Rama. The second mentality is to first understand the personages of Sita-Rama and then turn to the underlying philosophy. The Indian village mind functions like this. The villager first understands Sita to be the daughter of Mithila, who was taken away by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Rama killed him and brought Sita back. They understand this in story form first and then go into the spiritual dimensions. Thus the uneducated villagers experience both the exoteric and esoteric *Ramayana*. But their urban intellectual counterparts go about it by interpreting jivatma, paramatama, jnanendriyas, trishna and such things in the *Ramayana* before the human side of the story. The story becomes important for them only as a representation of a philosophy.

I also read the *Bhagavat*, which is essentially philosophy. People do not give as many discourses on the *Ramayana* as the *Bhagavat* because the *Ramayana* is just the story of Rama and Sita. I am not interested in the philosophy of the scriptures because I've already mastered it thoroughly by being well versed in the Upanishads and Vedas, but I like *Ramacharitamanas* as it narrates a plot, episode by episode. In between there is stress given to those parts, which are *param durgam*, unfathomable to follow. I follow these and the truth is driven home to me. I catch the purport then I talk about it. I like the story of the *Ramayana* so much that I go on reading and re-reading it again and again.

Out of the gravitational force

After thoroughly studying the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bible, the Koran and many other spiritual books which I have great respect for, I stopped my reading with *Ramacharitamanas*. This one book paved the way in my life. The greatest obstacle in my life was that I knew too much about God. I could think so much about him, but He only remained within the precincts of my mind; I couldn't go beyond. This book took me out from the gravitational force

of mind and intellect. This is the only book I read now. I don't read letters or newspapers. What is the use of reading them? They could not break the gravitational pull of my mind, but *Ramacharitamanas* took me out.

Ramacharitamanas is the story of Rama as narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati. I had in mind to render it into English. Until now all the renderings of this book into English have been very poor because they are written by scholars, teachers and lecturers, and not by someone who can feel it, but I have not received the mandate yet. If I receive the mandate, I will carry it out. Of course, I have also given up writing. I don't hold a pen in my hand now, but if I write a book at all by hand, as I have done in the past, it will be the literal translation of *Ramacharitamanas*. It will not need a commentary because the book itself is a commentary on faith.

A God with a home

I have not seen a book like *Ramacharitamanas*. The *Bhagavad Gita* contains knowledge, but *Ramacharitamanas* has the sweetness of nectar. I am a man of that taste because my whole life has been dry. I have never experienced sweetness. I have always lived in solitude and quiet with no concern for anyone. I have my own way of eating and sleeping. So, *Ramacharitamanas* came into this dry life with the sweetness of nectar. Since childhood I have also had a good relationship with poetry and literature which I have studied in depth, whether it be Hindi, Sanskrit, English or any other. *Ramacharitamanas* complements that aspect of my nature, but the biggest contribution it has made in my life has been to establish a sakara concept of God.

Sakara is the one who has a shape, a form and nirakara is the formless one. If God is formless, you can call Him nirakara, but how can you see the one who has no form? How can you ever see a formless entity and how can you name a nameless entity? How will you find the one who does not live anywhere? I don't want such a God. I want a

God who has a name and a form, who has a home and an address. This makes things easy. Great yogis and saints can find Him, but I want an easy way to locate His address, so I have enshrined Him in Raghunath Kutir. Everyday I take care of that room. I meditate and worship Him daily and I can say truly that my God lives there. Why should I say that God is everywhere? Maybe He is, I don't deny it, but where will I manage to keep hold of Him?

Water exists everywhere, but you drink it from your own well. God is everywhere, but I have enshrined Lord Raghunath in my room and He is mine. This I learned from *Ramacharitamanas*. You have tried millions of ways to find Him, but where did you find Him? Where will you worship Him? To what address will your letter be delivered? He will just drop it somewhere, but if you write to God, c/o-Raghunath Kutir, then He will receive your letter for sure. From *Ramacharitamanas* I learned that God is everywhere, but you have to hold Him at one place. The only thing I learned is that this light which you see comes from the sun, but it is not the sun. It has the warmth and brilliance of the sun, but it is not the sun. In the same way, I may have a spark of divinity, but I am not the Divine. I may be a part of Him, but I cannot be Him.

Teachings about life

Ramacharitamanas is also called *Tulsi Ramayana*. It contains many kinds of verses in different metres which tell the story of Rama and Sita as it was narrated by Lord Shiva to goddess Parvati. Lord Shiva tells the entire story of Rama. Ravana and his brother, Kumbhakarna, who slept for six months of the year. The story of Rama is one thing and the war between Rama and Ravana is another. The story of *Ramacharitamanas* is the skeleton structure, over which the teachings are delicately woven. Just as while constructing a house, you erect a pillar of iron bars, then fill it with concrete, lay bricks and finally plaster it, in the same way, the story of Rama is only the skeleton.

The real instruction is the teachings about life. It contains lessons on the philosophy of life, lessons on relationships, be it love between brother and sister, between two brothers, or between father and son, how these relationships should be lived and how they get distorted. That is the speciality of *Ramacharitamanas*, otherwise there are many picture books of Rama's story and other versions like Valmiki *Ramayana*, *Ananda Ramayana* and *Vikat Ramayana*. These versions may have some differences in the stories, but the tradition remains unchanged.

A gentle person like Rama was so modest and self-conscious that if someone offered him good food, he would quietly refuse. Rama was not outspoken. Even with friends he was gentle and controlled. He used to think carefully before saying anything. This is a very great quality. He would never blabber out whatever came to his mind. He was not a fool. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Rama is mentioned as the king among the clever. He was so wise, yet still he had a nature of his own. You may be very clever, very understanding and able to know other people's thoughts, but still you should be self-conscious. Self-conscious means that you think before you speak. Just like a tortoise pulls his limbs inside his shell and takes them out very carefully, in the same way, you must collect all your thoughts and express them carefully. In social life a person who speaks with forethought is least likely to meet with an accident.

Life timetable

Ramacharitamanas is for reciting and for pooja. Rama, Lakshman, Janaki is the best prasad. All other forms of prasad are perishable, but this prasad is imperishable. At the time of death your money will be locked in a bank, your car will remain in the garage. Your wife will see you to the door of the house, but she will go no further than that with you. Your relatives will accompany you to the cremation ground. Your own body will go with you to the funeral pyre, but no further than that. However, this prasad will accompany you

even after death and that is why I have given it to you. I give prasad in the form of wealth and resources because money is also necessary. Without money you cannot subsist, but at the same time, common sense, positive thoughts, intelligence, virtue and devotion are equally important. Food cooked without salt has no taste, just like sweets without sugar. Similarly, life without devotion is worthless because it has no meaning.

Ramacharitamanas deals with life, its conflicts, frustrations and disappointments. You can't call it a religious book. It is a book which deals with life in total, the life that began the day that you entered your mother's womb and which will end the day you lie down in a grave or your body is cremated. This life has so many facets: mind, relationships, different affairs, beliefs, lies and deceptions. There are so many things that one medicine cannot cure it.

Ramacharitamanas will give you a complete idea of the timetable of life. It is a timetable of life. Just as you have an aeroplane or railway timetable, so you also have a life timetable. Life is a journey and you should have a timetable.



2

The Actors

SRI RAMA

The birth of Sri Rama

We are talking about a very extraordinary person. According to historical research and astronomical calculation, Lord Rama was born on 4th December, 9,035 years ago. In modern times the month of Chaitra does not correspond to December, but the astronomical calculations differ by one to one and a half months after 9,135 years. According to lunar calculations, his birth falls somewhere in January. This astronomical calculation depends on the position of many stars and their movement which, of course, is a movement that we can predict.

The story about Sri Rama is very simple. An emperor, Manu, and his queen, Satarupa, renounced their kingdom and went to the forest. This was the tradition in India. After completing your duties to your family, you should leave your home and kingdom and go on a spiritual quest. They went to Nemisharanya, a place which now happens to be in Uttar Pradesh, on the banks of the Gomati. There they fasted and meditated for a very long time. While practising meditation they often heard voices saying, "Ask for whatever boon you want." But they kept quiet and continued their practices until their bodies became emaciated, like skeletons.

Finally God, whom I call Rama and others call Allah, Jehovah or something else, spoke to them. He asked, “What do you want?” And when they heard Him their bodies became completely fresh as if they had just left their kingdom. The boon they asked for was, “Lord, we want just one thing, a son like You.” The Lord said, “Okay, in the next age you will be born as a righteous and virtuous king, ruling Ayodhya. Satarupa will be your eldest queen and I will be born through her.”

So, Rama was born from Kaushalya 9,035 years ago, in Ayodhya. It is that Rama whom I have been talking about. It is that Rama whom I am asking you to think about all the time.

Ordinary people are born as a result of sexual interaction, but there are exceptions. Sri Rama was immaculate. We call such people incarnations of God. They are the effulgence of Divinity, they are personifications of Divinity. The divine light entered into a woman’s womb and a son was born – Rama, or Krishna, or Christ.

Christ was immaculate like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. Sri Rama was not born as a result of sexual interaction between Dasharatha and Kaushalya. Rama was born after Dasharatha performed the Putresthi Yajna in Ayodhya. Rishi Shringi conducted that yajna, as a result of which Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Bharat and Shatrughna were born. So when you say ‘incarnation of God’ you mean that the child was born without sexual interaction between a man and a woman. That is how Christ was born.

Life of Sri Rama

Rama is the darling of India. His name has come down through history, a name that represents the name of God. Those of you who do not know the story will have to read about the life of Sri Rama. He was born into the family of an emperor who, according to the historians, ruled over the whole continent many thousands of years before Christ. He was the eldest of four brothers who were born of three

mothers. Rama was the son of the eldest queen. The second queen also had a son, named Bharat. This queen was very beautiful and accomplished and the king loved her very much. The youngest queen had twins, Lakshman and Satrughna.

Dasharatha, his three queens and their sons are the basis of the story of the Ramayana. Sri Rama is the hero of the story. His life, behaviour, responses and reactions were all divine.

Ramacharitamanas has been translated into all the languages of the world. Films have also been made of it. The Japanese and the Russians have made films on the life of Sri Rama. I asked a philosopher from Japan what made the Japanese adopt Rama as their hero. He said, "Because his life is a guide to our generation. Rama and Sita represent an ideal which our generation lacks today."

Sri Rama – the ideal man

I was born into a kshatriya family, the caste of warriors, in the lineage of Ikshvaku, Rama's family line. Therefore, if I have a special affinity for Lord Rama, it is only natural. I love everything about him and his extraordinary life: his self-control, poise, restraint, culture, civility, manner of affection and enmity, stance and attitude towards his enemies. Lord Rama is a model for humanity and everyone should emulate him.

As a boy I worshipped Lord Rama as my hero. All children look for a model, an ideal to emulate. If you ask children how they would like their parents to be, out of fear they will keep quiet, but they look up to their parents as their role models. Parents have to live up to their children's expectations and be their models. Whenever the models fall short of the ideal, then children do not listen to their parents. A father drinks and counsels his son that drinking is bad. As a consequence children flout their parents.

In childhood I, too, needed a model. I looked but found no one. I was educated at a convent, but I chose Rama as

my model. Shiva's clothes are tattered, his hair matted and unkempt. He has no need for clothes. His ways are wild. His speech is devoid of charm. His companions are uncouth. What sort of a model would he make? Can you emulate Shiva? Can you wear a tiger skin? No! Could you wear a dhoti like Lord Rama? Yes! You can also wear *pitambar*, a yellow silk dhoti, like him. Everyone would like to wear beautiful clothing like Lord Rama.

Lord Shiva takes bhang. Can he be a model for people? Can they emulate Shiva's example? Society needs a model, an ideal, and that is Lord Rama. He is the universal model for all times and for all the people of the world: Africans, Americans, British, Australians, Chinese, Russians, Germans. Rama is a model for everyone. There may be a controversy about Lord Krishna, but Rama is indisputable.

Today the world is suffering and there is no one who can sacrifice his own life, for the sake of *dharma*, virtue, uprightness. I don't want to sacrifice myself. I have no courage. Nobody has the courage. We are Ravana. Let Rama incarnate.

Let Rama manifest, the man who can live for dharma. Let him incarnate and along with him the beautiful Sita, the goddess, the powerful prakriti, the powerful kundalini, the powerful shakti, the powerful daughter of earth. Sita is the daughter of the earth and that is where we see the kundalini, in mooladhara chakra. The *tattwa*, or element, of mooladhara is *prithvi*, the earth element.

Unique relationship of Rama and Shiva

In childhood I chose Rama as my ideal, but when I was initiated into sannyasa I got caught in the Shaiva tradition. So for me it was like a man loving two women at the same time. Whom to marry? My guru told me to marry both. I wondered how and he suggested I make Lord Rama my ishta devata and Lord Shiva my ishta mantra. Since then I've been chanting *Om Namah Shivaya* and meditating on Lord Rama. People think God may be displeased with this, but He

never gets annoyed. When Shiva saw me chanting his name and meditating on Rama, he said, “Very good.” And when Lord Rama came to know that I meditate on him but chant Lord Shiva’s mantra, he said, “Fine, fine.” There was perfect understanding between the two of them. When two girls can agree, then what problem can arise for the boy in marrying both of them?

I had been chanting this mantra for a long time without knowing who Shiva was. Is he Somnath, Pashupatinath, Baidyanath, Vishwanath or Mrityunjaya, the Lord of Tryambakeshwar? I wanted to know who he is, what he looks like? So I thought, let me have an interview with Shiva. I must have *sakshatkar*, his mystic vision. I was trying to discover how this could happen when this method came to my mind.

Both Lord Shiva and Lord Rama are mutual friends, devotees, bhaktas and disciples. They admire and love each other and they surrender to each other. Rama thinks of Shiva continuously and Shiva meditates on Rama. Shiva does japa of Rama’s name and Rama chants the name of Shiva. Shiva follows Rama everywhere. He also attended Rama’s wedding. Shiva was present when Rama was playing in the courtyard of King Dasharatha and even when Rama was born. This is told in the story of Kakabhushundi. This is the state of affairs between them. Shiva was present for Rama’s coronation ceremony as well.

Rama’s guru seva

Service to the guru is of many kinds. Lord Krishna used to collect wood at Sandipani’s place. Do you know where Lord Rama used to live at Vasishtha’s place? Rama who was the prince of Ayodhya? In Vasishtha’s cave, where Vasishtha himself used to live, ninety-six miles away from Rishikesh, near Brahmapuri, right on the bank of the river Ganga. Shatrughana used to live next to Swami Sivananda’s ashram and Bharat used to live in Rishikesh proper. Lakshman used to live where Lakshman’s bridge is now.

The four brothers were living at four different places and Vasishtha was living ninety-six miles away. If you see that area now in this computer age, it is forest and mountain, and then, in Treta Yuga, God knows how many lions and leopards must have been roaming about. Still, life is spent like this with the guru.

Lord Rama spent his life with his guru. He worked with a spade, looked after the cows and buffaloes, picked up wood for the ashram. Maybe he also washed Arundhati's clothes. Who knows? He must have done everything as service. He must have travelled back and forth daily, and it would not have been on horseback. While living in the gurukul, he had to follow the rules of the ashram. He had to sleep on the floor, which was the rule in the ancient period. Lord Rama had to lead a hard life and he was trained in his guru's ashram. As it is said:

*Guru griha gaye padhan Raghurai
Alpa kaal vidya sab payee.*

Rama went to his guru's place to study.

In a very short time he received all knowledge.

(BK after *do* 203)

Later on, when Lord Rama was exiled to the forests, he did not feel the pain and hardship of forest life because the austerity of his guru's ashram had made the pain of life lighter. The austerity of the guru's ashram renders that service. The difficulties which come in life are of many kinds. They are in the form of pain: poverty is pain, hunger is pain, thirst is pain, disease is pain, criticism and backbiting are pain; there are many types of pain. So these become lighter, insignificant.

The play of Bharat Milap

The drama of Bharat Milap, narrates a part of Lord Rama's life. The coronation of Rama has been announced and this scene depicts the celebration. The next scene shows King Dasharatha being forced to send his son Rama into exile.

Dasharatha goes into depression, the exile is announced and Rama leaves for the forest. He comes to the shores of the Ganga where the tribal chief welcomes him.

Rama wants to cross the Ganga by boat, but the boatman refuses, saying, "O Rama, I have heard that by your touch, a stone was turned into a human being. I am not going to take you across because my boat will become a human being and then how will I earn my livelihood?" So saying, he begs permission to wash the feet of Sri Rama and Sita, then takes them across the river. This is one of the most touching scenes in *Ramacharitamanas*. Then Rama, Sita and Lakshman arrive at Chitrakoot, their first stop, where they stay for one and a half years.

Meanwhile, his younger brother Bharat, who is the son of the second queen, Kaikeyi, returns from his maternal uncle's place. It is announced that Bharat is to be crowned and that Rama has gone into exile. At this, Bharat gets terribly angry with his mother and decides that he will not accept the throne. Instead he will go to Chitrakoot and bring his elder brother, Rama, back. So the younger brother, Bharat, goes to meet Rama in the forest along with the queen mothers, the royal retinue and the army.

Bharat arrives at Chitrakoot with the entire retinue and requests Rama to return to Ayodhya. Rama replies, "No, my father has asked me to go to the forest for fourteen years and I must fulfil his orders." So, Rama gives his *khatrau*, wooden sandals, to Bharat who returns without Rama to rule the kingdom as a trustee for fourteen years.

The last scene takes place at Nandigram. On returning from the forest, Bharat places the *kharau* on the throne of Ayodhya, but refuses to enter the city. He says, "If my brother is in exile, I will also remain in exile and live the same life of tapasya and brahmacharya." So, we have Rama living the life of a forest dweller and Bharat living the life of a mendicant outside the capital in Nandigram. This is the most touching scene in *Ramacharitamanas*. It is much more important than the killing of Ravana.

There are two important things in the *Ramayana*. One is Bharat Milap, when Rama and Bharat meet at Chitrakoot after Rama's exile, and the other is Rama Vivaha, the wedding of Sita.

SITA

Sita is the darling of millions and millions throughout the ages. She was an ideal of chastity, a lady who suffered and who faced tragedy throughout her life, but never compromised her chastity. She is the lady who caused the destruction of an atrocious, demonical empire and whom we adore as divinity personified – Sita-Rama.

Thousands of years ago a girl was fostered in the north of Bihar, across the Ganga, in the family of King Janaka. She was found completely forsaken in a field when it was being ploughed. The king picked up that baby and took care of her. She became very powerful and important. The *Ramayana* says she was so beautiful that she represented the totality of beauty. There is nothing in this world to be compared to that beauty. After her marriage she was kidnapped by Ravana, a demonical king, and that is the story.

When she was just five years old, her father wanted to perform pooja. At that time she moved a big bow, which was the family heirloom, from the sadhana room all by herself. It was so heavy that no ordinary man could lift it, yet she just picked it up with her left hand. So her foster father, King Janaka, said, "This girl will be married only to the one who can lift this bow." It was Rama who could do this and nobody else. So that is how he was selected to be Sita's bridegroom.

Dharma of a husband and dharma of a king

Rama loved Sita very much as he had no doubt in his mind, but he was a powerful emperor and he had defeated Ravana, another powerful emperor. Ravana and most of his army died, but some of his people were still living in different places. They had to find some way to destroy Rama without

using military force and they discovered the weakness in his society. The social ethics of Ayodhya, in particular, and India, in general, were that if your wife remains with another man for a year, you cannot take her back. That was the weak point in the society, so they struck the blow at that point! They started the rumour.

This was a very sensitive issue at the time and still is today, at least in India. Rama had no choice. He could not stay with Sita because the whole kingdom asked him, “What exactly are you trying to tell us?” So, he thought it was much better if Sita went. She was not hurt because she was not a brahmin, vaishya or shudra. Sita was a kshatriya, and kshatriya children are taught right from birth to face difficulties in life with courage and happiness. Death, insult and injury must be faced with an open heart. She had that training, so she could follow the path of sacrifice in separation from her beloved Rama.

Naturally, as husband and wife they missed each other, but she did her dharma and he did his because he had different obligations to fulfil. As a husband his obligation was to his wife, but as a king and emperor his obligation was to his subjects. He had to decide which dharma to follow, the dharma to his wife or the dharma to his subjects. Rama was a very conscientious person; he renounced his personal dharma and accepted the community dharma. Sita was sent away, not because she was bad, but because of the prevailing social ethics.

Sita went to the forest where she lived in the ashram of Valmiki, which was a very renowned hermitage. There she gave birth to twin sons, Lava and Khusha. The two boys received the best education in the ashram under the tutelage of Valmiki. Valmiki also wrote the first *Ramayana* during their stay in the ashram, because he knew the whole story. That *Ramayana* was written during Rama’s lifetime itself and was sung to him in his court by his twin sons, whom he could not recognize. They were singing this Rama katha in the streets. Rama heard it and called them in and so they sang it to him.

Of course, there are people who say, “No, he did wrong,” but I feel that a man has to have some sort of discrimination and final judgement regarding his own dharma.

Being a husband is a secondary dharma, being an emperor is a primary dharma. He was a king first and a husband next. I also have two dharmas: I am a sannyasin first and a guru next. If there is a crisis I will always look to my sannyasa dharma, not to my guru dharma, as I have done in most cases. When there is an acute dilemma about one’s dharma in life, a person should follow the dharma which he thinks to be his very own. Sri Rama was a king first and foremost. *Rajadharma*, kingship, was his first dharma. His personal dharma of being a husband to Sita came next in priority.

There was a tussle about Sri Rama’s dharma as a king and his dharma as a husband, and the *rajadharma* won over the personal dharma. So, he did no wrong in sending Sita to Valmiki’s ashram. The talk that must have gone around amongst different people of those times is not recorded in word for word detail. Similarly, whatever must have transpired between Sri Rama and Sita is not documented either. The exchange which took place between husband and wife remained a closely guarded secret till the end, so no light can be thrown on this part of the story.

All this is such ancient history that it is difficult to maintain a clear and authentic version. For example, the Dwarka of five thousand years ago and the Nalanda of five hundred or a thousand years ago are not yet exactly located and fully explored. Similarly, in this ancient story one cannot really define how much is factual and how much is interpolated, how much has been added or deleted from the original text, but at least one event is definitely historical and that is Sita’s long stay at Valmiki’s ashram where she gave birth to the twin boys, Lava and Khusha.

How Sri Rama and Sita parted, what their parting words were, whether they fought and separated or compromised and had a mutual understanding before they parted, is not

known. Maybe they decided that they had had enough of worldly life and the royal set up. Maybe they thought it was time for Sita to go into *vanaprastha ashrama*, to go away to the forest and lead a life of self-imposed austerity and service. Had they left the kingdom together, had Sri Rama abdicated his throne again for love of Sita, the story would have taken an entirely different turn, thereby implying a different purpose and symbolism. Sri Rama's leaving the kingdom would have redefined the term dharma itself.

In Tulsidas' *Ramacharitamanas* Sri Rama and Sita's second separation has little or no significance, but in Valmiki's *Ramayana* it is given more importance. *Ramacharitamanas* is purely a spiritual book which was not intended just to tell the history of Rama alone, but to instil bhakti into the hearts of the people so that they would become more devoted to God. The purpose of the Valmiki *Ramayana* was to document the history of Rama. The background, the social and political circumstances and ethos were very peculiar when *Ramacharitamanas* was written. Firstly, Tulsidas wanted to awaken the people against Muslim misrule, but he also had to be very discreet and covert in his method. Therefore, he resorted to the figure of Sri Rama.

Secondly, the animosity between the Vaishnava and the Shaiva sects was so acute that, in spite of Adi Shankaracharya's reforms, assigning a Shaiva priest in the temple of Sri Narayana, the differences were not settled. The intellectuals and the common people were still fiercely divided over the Shaiva-Vaishnava factions. Tulsidas found a way to end the differences and integrate the people into a cultural unity. He made Sri Rama and Shiva each other's devotees and ishta devatas. This artifice trickled right down to the grass-roots and the masses accepted the ensuing harmony. Today we see the fruit of this. Sri Rama is worshipped in a Shiva temple and Lord Shiva is worshipped in Sri Rama's temple.

THE WEDDING

Beauty is one of the most important attributes of God. God is not ugly. God is satyam, shivam, sundaram – one attribute of God is truth, another is auspiciousness and the third is beauty. On the day of Sita's marriage, everyone should look as beautiful as possible. Marriage is a ceremony where everything is beautiful, glamorous and exquisite. It is one of the happiest occasions of life, when purusha meets prakriti, when God meets nature, when the unmanifest meets the manifest in order to propagate.

So, come to the marriage, dressed in auspicious clothes. The shastras consider geru to be inauspicious apparel. Even I won't wear black or a langoti. I shall also wear something appropriate for the joyous occasion. King Janaka may even envy my appearance.

Shiva's bow

All of you know that Sita's father, King Janaka, had decided that only the one who could lift and string Shiva's bow would wed Sita. This bow had been ordained to Janaka's family by Lord Shiva; it was their family heirloom. When Sita was just five or six years old, she happened to go into the room where the bow was kept. Her doll fell under the bow, but she could not reach it so she moved the bow. King Janaka exclaimed, "What's this? This small child is able to move the bow. Impossible!" He then decided that this extraordinary girl should have an extraordinary husband and proclaimed, "Only he who can string this bow will wed my daughter, otherwise she will not marry."

Years later, when Sita was ready for marriage, kings and heroes were invited. In those days, it was the custom for the girl to choose the man she wanted to marry. This custom does not prevail in India today. It was discarded after this country was invaded, but it was an Indian custom known as *swayamvara*, which literally means 'choose yourself'. At the swayamvara, boys who are none other than kings,

emperors, heroes and invisible conquerors are all brought into the assembly. To be invited to the swayamvara it was not just important that they be rich, they had to be mighty and powerful too. The girl would then choose one of them for her husband. However, in Sita's swayamvara the condition was only he who could string the bow would win her hand. Many kings tried to string the bow, but they were not successful. One day Guru Vishvamitra was present with Rama. He ordered Rama to string the bow. Rama lifted the bow, strung it and in the process broke it into two pieces.

In between these episodes there is an entire gamut of emotional factors. What are they and what do they signify? First of all the kings could not break the bow. Janaka became worried, thinking, "If nobody can string the bow, my daughter will remain a virgin." To keep a virgin daughter at home is not and has never been the custom in India. It is a sin, a social error. Indians, particularly Hindus, will not accept the idea of an unmarried daughter remaining at home, and this custom is still alive today. So Janaka was worried and asked, "What has happened? Where are the mighty people? Are they all dead?"

Then Lakshman, Rama's brother, became angry. He was always a firecracker, exploding at every little thing. He exclaimed, "What nonsense is this king talking? He says that there are no mighty people in this world. If Janaka were to invite me, I could lift the bow and break it into two pieces, like a lotus stalk!" Sita was also greatly worried. When she met Rama for the first time in the garden, she saw this very handsome boy picking flowers for his guru and perspiring. She became spellbound because she recognized him at once, and said to herself, "Oh yes, this is my own darling, but my father has made this condition about the bow."

Sita is mahashakti, adishakti, and Rama is the supreme God. The divine God and his maya have reincarnated as Sita and Rama. When God incarnates in the physical body, he is subject to the gunas of prakriti. Incarnation does not take place without being subject to the gunas of prakriti because

God is nameless, formless and attributeless. He has no place, no name and no colour, but when he wants to incarnate, he has to subject himself to the laws of prakriti, which are birth and death, sorrow and joy. You and I are both subject to prakriti; the whole world is subject to prakriti. Therefore, even though she is adishakti, when Sita was born into maya, she is also subject to the three gunas of prakriti, as is Rama.

So, Sita is worried because she really likes Rama. She thinks, “If Rama perspires when he is picking flowers, how will he be able to fix the bow?” But, in fact, Rama was not sweating because he was picking flowers. The problem was that when Rama saw Sita, he also became completely hypnotized. He controlled himself, however, saying, “No, this is not right. I am Raghuvanshi. I am the scion of a great race, I have a tradition, I have a heritage, I have a dharma. I belong to the dynasty of Raghu, the great king. How is Rama expected to behave? He shouldn’t have these feelings for a woman who is not his wife. Sita is not my wife. I can look at her, but I can’t go beyond that. I can’t direct my passions, emotions and desires towards her.” Rama was perspiring because he was worried. Afterwards, when the bow was broken, Sita took the garland or *varmala* to Rama. *Var* means chosen, *mala* means garland. When a woman chooses a man as her husband, the first thing she does is to garland him.

This is a straightforward story, narrated by Tulsidas in simple language. It has also been written by Adi Kavi Valmiki. His *Ramayana* is most beautiful, but for Valmiki, Rama is a perfect man. Valmiki has narrated the story of Rama as the perfect man whereas Tulsidas has narrated the life of Rama as the incarnation of the absolute principle, parabrahman, paramatma, the totality, the absolute Self in substance.

Rejoicing

In *Ramacharitamanas*, the swayamvara of Sita and her marriage of Sri Rama is described as follows: “The endless ocean of love looks beautiful. The waves of this ocean

swell up to see the full moon in the form of Sri Rama. The drums are beating in the skies and the heavenly dancers begin to dance. Brahma and the other gods and munishwaras are eulogizing and blessing Sri Prabhu Rama. Colourful flowers and garlands are being showered upon him from the skies. The kinnaras are singing melodies. The whole universe is rent with triumphal cheers in which the sound of the breaking of the bow sings inaudibly. Everybody, all the men and women, are overwhelmed with joy and are telling each other the grand news that Sri Rama has broken Shiva's bow.

“The court bards and minstrels are praising the Lord with an endless chain of compliments. People are making offerings of elephants, horses, wealth, coins, clothes and other riches. The mridanga, drums, conch, shehnai and all the auspicious musical instruments are playing sonorous music. Young damsels are singing in every nook and corner. The queen, along with all her companions, becomes exceedingly happy. It is as if the parched paddy has received a fresh shower of rain. King Janaka gives up his anxiety and attains joy in its place, as if a tired swimmer at last has caught on to a raft to keep himself afloat. All the contesting kings are outshone by the victory of Rama, like the flame of the lamp is outdone by the daylight.

How can Sita's joy be described? She is like the chatak bird getting the sweet raindrops of the Swati nakshatra. Lakshman is eyeing Sri Rama like the baby chakor gazing up at the full moon. Then Sadanandaji consents and Sita goes up to Sri Rama. Her friends and companions accompany her, singing songs of joyful union. Sita is walking as gracefully as the royal swan. Her beauty is beyond description. She is the most beautiful among many pictures of beauty. Sita is holding the *jayamala*, garland of victory, glittering with the triumph of the universe. Although she feels boundless love for Sri Rama in her heart, her body is completely restrained and there is no overt expression of love for him.

As she approaches her Lord, she is so spellbound by his divine beauty that she stands still like a picture. Understanding her state of mind, her friends secretly nudge her to garland Sri Rama. Coming out of her spell, Sita raises her hands to put the garland around Sri Rama's neck, but is too shy to do it. Her hands look like the stems of lotus flowers being offered to the moon. Sita's friends once again burst into song and Sita manages to garland Sri Rama. As the garland is placed on Sri Rama, the gods begin to rain down flowers. All the kings in the court withdraw into themselves like the bud of a lotus shies away at the first rays of the sun in the morning.

The whole of Janakpuri, the earth and the sky, begin to reverberate with music. The wicked lose face and the good beam with happiness. The gods, kinnaras, humans, nagas and munishwaras charge the atmosphere with their shouts of applause, proclaiming Sri Rama's victory and their hearty blessing. The wives of the gods are showering flowers on the couple and singing. Everywhere resounds with the vedic chants of the brahmins. The birds do not stop singing in praise of Prabhu Rama.

The earth, heaven and nether world are engulfed with the glory of Sri Rama's wondrous feat of breaking the bow and marrying Sita. The people of the town are waving lights, performing arti to Sri Rama, and offering the couple the best of all that they have. Sri Rama and Sita are such a beautiful couple that it seems as if an erotic romance and beauty are strung together. Sita's friends suggest that she touch Rama's feet. She is overawed by his brilliance. Remembering the story of Ahalya, Rishi Gautam's wife, she hesitates. Sri Rama, aware of Sita's unparalleled love for him, smiles secretly in his heart."

Real union

The principle and philosophy of marriage is union, not between matter and matter or energy and energy, but union between time and space. It is union between the

mathematical principle of plus and minus. Nobody knows when the principle of union first took place. When purusha and prakriti united millions, billions and trillions of light years ago, this perceptible universe came into being. This union between purusha and prakriti is the union between consciousness and nature. When this union is the beginning of the universe, the cause of the whole cosmos, why shouldn't man and woman unite? This is the tradition of union.

In our society, marriage plays a very important role. We sannyasins who have renounced and forgone the joy of marriage do not deny its importance. We think marriage is not only important to a woman, but also for a man. This wild beast of a man has to be domesticated. The process of domestication is possible only through marriage because the ruler is not a male, the ruler is female. Remember this. It is also she who trains this wild man, domesticates him and teaches him how to behave. We do not decry marriage at all, rather we want you to marry.

The marriage of Sita with Sri Rama, represents the union between prakriti and purusha; you may also call them Shiva and Shakti. Rama represents the cosmic being, the ultimate or absolute consciousness, and Sita represents mahashakti, cosmic energy. Shiva, Rama, absolute consciousness, God, Allah, Jehovah are all names coined by us. God has no name; absolute consciousness has no name. In English, we call this principle absolute consciousness. In Sanskrit it is called *parampurusha*, *paramatman*, and *parameshwara*. There is no need to fight over these names. We can also say that there is consciousness, which is called *chaitanya*, and there is matter, which is not conscious. When they meet, the cosmos is born. Similarly, when man and woman meet, a child is born. When a seed meets the earth, a plant is born.

Everything that is born is a result of the union between purusha and prakriti. From the smallest bacteria to the largest constellation in the universe, everything that takes birth, everything that manifests, is a product of the union of purusha and prakriti in different realms. There is union

in chemicals, in minerals, in the vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. Even in the mind, when a thought that is masculine in nature meets a thought that is feminine, a result accrues in the form of purity or impurity, good or evil. Good and evil are both born out of the union of two types of thoughts. The thoughts unite, so you have to be very careful about what kind of bride or bridegroom you choose in your mind. The mental union is important. A good, holy or pure thought is the result or the son of the union between two forms of thinking.

The marriage of Sita and Rama takes place in various dimensions. A wedding between a man and a woman is one dimension of marriage. But there is another dimension where the spirit joins the higher transcendental experience. The mind is wedded to the self, the mind is wedded to the spirit.

Rama represents the indweller of all beings. Rama is the all-pervading, ever-permeating, omnipresent reality and Sita is the spirit. God is not alone. God has a power within Him and that power is called Sita. There are many people who think that God is alone, that He is a bachelor. My God is not a bachelor. If we were to ask if the gods have consorts, we would find that Rama has Sita, Vishnu has Lakshmi, Brahma has Saraswati and Shiva has Parvati.

HANUMAN

Hanuman was not a disciple of Rama. He was a minister in the cabinet of King Sugriva, but he had a premonition that one day Rama would come in search of Sita while he was in exile. So he was waiting for that day. From the time Hanuman met Sri Rama near the Rishyamuka hill, he served him under the orders of Sugriva. The most striking things about Hanuman were his physical strength, intelligence and devotion to duty. He was a very capable man.

Hanuman was born near Nasik in Maharashtra, very close to Tryambakeshwar. From childhood he was so strong

that he could lift an elephant as if it were a ball. Hanuman was Rama's trusted friend, but since he had a devotional attitude and manner in relation to Rama, people think that he was his disciple. He considered himself the servant of Rama. A disciple or servant must have one quality, absolute surrender. If you turn the steering wheel to the right, the car moves to the right. If you turn the steering wheel to the left and the car moves to the right, there is something wrong with the car. When the guru tells you to do something, you have to do it. That was the quality of Hanuman and he had great faith.

In Japan an animated film has been made about *Ramayana*. The Japanese people hold Rama and Sita in high esteem and admire the ideals personified by them. The traditional values have degenerated in Japan with the modern times, so they researched all the sources in order to restore them. In the *Ramayana* they found values and ideals that could be given to their children as models of conduct. So they turned to India, the source of the *Ramayana*.

The word *hanu* means 'chin', so Hanuman means 'he who has a prominent chin'. Chin here refers to *jalandhara bandha*, the chin lock, which is a yogic practice. Hanuman's duties, accomplishments and achievements are all feats of yoga, whether he was flying in the sky, leaping across the ocean or burning the city of Lanka. All his actions and miracles are not the deeds of a wrestler or a muscleman. They are yogic *siddhis*, manifestations of yogic power.

No muscleman can fly, cross the ocean in one leap, lift a mountain or burn a city. Only a person who has perfected yoga could do all this. Hanuman was a great yogi. His name relates to *jalandhara bandha*, a practice that awakens the prana vayu for which he was so famous. Being a master of prana he could change his form and increase the dimensions of his body. In fact, it was said that he was an aspect of Shiva. When Lord Rama was born, Shiva was born as the avatar Hanuman. Vishnu was born as the avatar Rama.

Strength and brahmacharya

Hanuman is always the first to arrive wherever satsang is being held. When the satsang ends and everyone leaves, he is the last to go. That is the role of Hanuman in satsang. So, when you come to satsang, find out who is the first to arrive. When everybody is leaving, find out who is the last and try to be the last yourself. Hanuman is a beloved boy. In Indonesia, which is predominantly a Muslim country and has the largest Muslim population, boys jump on the trees and say, “I am Hanuman!”

Hanuman represents bhramacharya, strength and valour. In India there are many akharas where young boys are trained in wrestling. They are all named after Hanuman: Hanuman Akhara, Bajarang Akhara, Bajarang Bali Akhara. Every town and village has an akhara where young children are taught the art of wrestling. These akharas are small rooms, barely ten feet by twenty feet, with sandpits where young boys go in the morning to do push-ups. Many years ago, maybe in 1945, I went to an akhara and did one hundred and eight rounds of surya namaskara at one stretch.

The *langoti*, or loincloth, is also associated with Hanuman. A langoti is like a suspended bandage. What I wear is called a kopeen. A langoti is something else. In India they say, “Eh! Keep your langoti tight,” which means maintain your brahmacharya; it should not become loose. Hanuman was famous for his brahmacharya and never broke his celibacy. Hanuman represents strength and true brahmacharya. For him, all the women in the world were mothers. In India, the elders tell the children to go to akharas where wrestling is taught, because the akhara plants the seed of brahmacharya. Indian people consider this to be important, not only for the individual, but also for social discipline.

Service and intelligence

Hanuman is also famous for service, *seva*. He was Sri Rama’s doorkeeper. There are beautiful stories about him. There is a special hymn called *Hanuman Chalisa*, which every Indian

knows by heart. Indians have so much faith in Hanuman that on Tuesdays, the day that has been designated for Hanuman worship, the queues at his temples are several miles long. People line up to offer incense, laddoos and flowers. Hanuman is an ideal for all Indians. Every other god has become a matter of controversy for some reason or another. For example, people ask why did Rama leave Sita, or why did Sri Krishna play with girls, but Hanuman is non-controversial. He is first in service and in strength as well as being a great and learned man.

Hanuman was intelligent, well-educated and qualified. He was a true professional. These are Hanuman's three qualifications: he could fly, he could swim and he could make his body smaller than an ant or bigger than a giant. He was *atichatura*, a most clever man. That is why Rama made him his personal assistant. Rama himself was supremely intelligent. He was not a foolish man. In *Ramacharitamanas* he is called *chatura shiromani*. He was not only intelligent, he was the crest jewel, the king of intelligent people. When Rama is super intelligent, his peers should also be highly intelligent, otherwise they cannot get along.

Hanuman is also the greatest *bhakta* or devotee of Rama. Rama is in his heart all the time. He is full of devotion for Rama with the spirit of a servant. His relationship with Rama is that of master and servant. I chant the *Hanuman Chalisa* every day when I bathe. When I complete one hundred rounds of japa, I offer my prayers to Hanuman to free any innocent person who may be in distress.



3

God – With or Without Form

Why can't a formless entity have form? What is the form of clay? An earthen lamp? A clay pot? Clay does not have a form of its own, but whatever form you give it, that becomes its form. Does gold have a form of its own? A chain? No, the form of gold is not a chain. Gold has been made into that form, but it has no form of its own. You can make gold into a bracelet. You give it a form, *sakara*, and a name, but neither that name nor that form is the form of gold. Just as gold is formless, God is also formless. We may have depicted Him as Rama and Krishna, but it will not be incorrect to also say that He is formless, *nirakara*.

In *Ramacharitamanas*, Shiva tells Parvati that God takes different forms according to the love of His devotees:

*Sagunahi agunahi nahim kachu bheda
Gāvahim muni purāna budha bedā,
Aguna arūpa alakha aja joī
Bhagata prema basa saguna so hoī.*

*Jo guna rahita saguna soi kaisem
Jalu hima upala bilaga nahim jaisem,*

The sages, wise men, Vedas and Puranas, all profess:
There is no difference between God
With or without attributes.

That attributeless, formless, invisible and unborn One
Possesses attributes according to the devotees' love.
Shaking off non-form
The One possesses attributes
Like water freezing into solid ice.

(BK after *do* 115)

Different people have seen Him in different forms. Someone saw Him in the form of a yogi, or as a mad man, or with Ganga flowing from his matted locks. Others saw Him in the form of a naked ascetic, as a ghost, as a person intoxicated with ganja. Some saw Him as a beautifully adorned bridegroom on His way to marry Parvati. He has been seen in innumerable forms. Why should anybody lie about this? What would be gained? What is truth is truth. God exists in all forms.

You may see God in the form of a serpent, or *devi*, the goddess, or a hideous sadhu, or *Bala Mukunda*, the beautiful child Sri Krishna, or Sri Rama with bow in hand. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (10:21–10:39), Lord Krishna says, “Among the Vedas, I am the Sama; among trees, I am the peepul; among rivers, I am the Ganga; among months, I am Marga Sheersha; among heavenly bodies I am the moon . . .”

A form for the innocent

How can you see God's form? Is God with form or is He without form? God has no particular form, but any form is His form. It depends on what the potter wants to make. Earth has no form, but the potter makes many things out of it. All those are forms of earth. A goldsmith makes various ornaments from silver and gold. Are they the form of gold? No, gold has no form. Even the golden ornament which you wear is not the form of gold. It is gold that is all. We attribute the name and form to it. In the *Kathopanishad*, Yama says to Nachiketa, “God, residing in the chamber of the heart of this jivatma, is subtler than subtle and greater than great. Only rare sadhakas who are free from desire and anxiety can experience Him and that also only by His grace.”

What form has cotton? A shirt, a cap, trousers, underwear or bedsheets? We give cotton a form. Similarly, we create a form or a mould and in that mould we see His form, because He is the smallest and He is the largest.

So, which form should one see? Shiva is beautiful, in the sense that he is very attractive. He is a mad man, adorned with snakes and scorpions, who sits on a bull and smokes ganja. His body is besmeared with ashes and his hair is matted. Shiva's beauty is such that if you met him, you would go into a trance. His wife is so lovely and so glorious that everybody who looks at her says, "What a beauty!" In *Ramacahritamanas*, however, Tulsidas has said, "I am not going to describe the beauty of Parvati, because she is my mother." How can you describe the beauty of your mother? You can describe anyone else's beauty, but the beauty of one's mother is private.

do – Bahuri muninha himavanta kahuñ lagana sunāi āi,
Samaya biloki bibāha kara paṭhae deva bolāi.

Boli sakala sura sādara līnhe
Sabahi jathocita āsana dīnhe,
Bedī beda bidhāna sañvārī
Subhaga sumaṅgala gāvahiñ nārī.

Siñghāsanu ati dībya suhāvā
Jāi na barani birañci banāvā,
Baiṭhe sīva bipranha siru nāi
Hṛdayañ sumiri nija prabhu raghurāi.

Bahuri munīsanha umā bolāiñ
Kari siñgāru sakhīñ lai āiñ,
Dekhata rūpu sakala sura mohe
Baranai chabi asa jaga kabi ko hai.

Jagadambikā jāni bhava bhāmā
Suranha manahiñ mana kīnha pranāmā,
Sundaratā marajāda bhavānī
Jāi na koṭihuñ badana bakhānī.

charṁ – *Koṭihurṁ badana nahim banai baranata jaga janani sobhā mahā,
Sakucahirṁ kahata śruti seṣa sārada mandamati tulasī kahā.
Chabikhāni mātu bhavāni gavanīm madhya maṇḍapa siva jahāñ,
Avaloki sakahirṁ na sakuca pati pada kamala manu madhukaru
tahāñ.*

Then the munis called Uma.
Her friends brought Her fully decorated.
All the gods were charmed to see Her beauty.
Where is the poet in the whole world
Who can describe Her charming form?
All the gods bowed down to Her inwardly,
Knowing that, being the consort of Lord Shiva,
She is the Mother of the Universe.
Parvati is the epitome of beauty,
She cannot be praised even by millions of mouths.
What to say of a feather-brained poet like Tulsidas?
Even the Vedas, Sheshnag and Saraswati
Feel shy to describe anything about Her.
At last, the fountainhead of beauty,
Mother Parvati, was brought to the mandap,
Where Lord Shiva had taken His seat.
Feeling shyness, She could not even look
At the lotus feet of Her husband,
Although the black bee, representing the mind,
Was already there enjoying bliss.

(BK after *do* 99)

Tulsidas says that after their marriage, Shiva and Parvati came to Mount Kailash and they lived a very happy life. I can imagine how Shiva would have lived in his cave. I can imagine the sounds in the forest. Dense, dark and deep forests were all around my home, haunted by tigers, leopards, panthers, hyenas and big stags. However if you cannot imagine it yourself, then the form of Sri Rama is very beautiful.

To worship God with a form is very difficult. It is nice to say that God is abstract, transcendental, formless, nameless,

spaceless. You can believe it and say, “Yes, it is right. I think it is like that.” However, when you say that God has the form of Shiva, Vishnu or Brahma, it is hard to believe. Children and those who have innocent hearts and minds can believe it, but intellectuals will say, “What? The son of a king? Krishna running after girls? He was married eight times! Has God got a wife?”

It is hard to believe, like an innocent child, that God has a form. For the innocent, this path is the easiest, safest, surest, quickest and perhaps the best. For the intellect, it is the most difficult, because the mind which rationalizes does not accept it.

*Umā rāma subhāu jehim jānā
Tāhi bhajanu taji bhāva na ānā*

(SK after *do* 33)

*so – Asa bicāri matidhīra taji kutarka saṁsaya sakala
Bhajahu rāma raghubīra karunākara sundara sukhada*

Thinking thus, those detached persons
Who know Him fully,
Repeat the name of Rama,
Abandoning all kinds of reason.
Therefore, considering this,
Abandoning all doubt and confusion,
Repeat the name of Rama,
Who is the ocean of compassion,
So beautiful and so pleasing.

(UK *so* 90 *kha*)

God is neither formless nor with form. The truth is that he is both formless and with form. Tulsidas says:

*Sagunahi agunahi nahim kachu bhedā
Gāvahim muni purāna budha bedā,
Aguna arūpa alakha aja joī
Bhagata prema basa saguna so hoī.*

No difference exists between
The formless God and the God of form.
Thus speak the Vedas and Puranas,
The munis and the wise.
The same formless, unseen,
Unborn and attributeless God
Takes the form impressed
By the love of the devotee.

(BK after *so* 115)

Kabir Das has also said:

The formless God is my father,
And the God of form is my mother.
Whom to praise and whom to denounce?
Both sides of the balance are in equilibrium.

What is the form of cotton? Is it a thread or a length of cloth from the market? Is it the shirt, trousers or cap you are wearing? Cotton has no form, but all these are forms of cotton. What is the form of gold? Is it your bracelet or earrings? Gold has no form, but all the forms it takes are of gold. Your necklace, earrings and anklets are its form; a lump of gold is also its form. None of these forms is the one and only form. A form is something which is everlasting and unchanging. Similarly, God has no form and all forms are forms of God. Whichever form catches your attention, sticks in your mind and eventually manifests before you is the form of God. Therefore, it is said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Eka anīha arūpa anāmā
Aja saccidānanda para dhāmā,
Byāpaka bisvarūpa bhagavānā
Tehin dhari deha carita kṛta nānā.*

*So kevala bhagatana hita lāgī
Parama kṛpāla pranata anurāgī,*

The Lord is one, free of desire, formless
Nameless, unborn, satchidananda and divine,
He is omnipresent, in form of the universe.
Even such a Lord incarnated in a human body
And played different roles for the sake of His devotees.
Such is the unassuming, compassionate nature
Of the supreme and loving Lord.

(BK after *do* 12)

A form to worship

In our culture, based on vedic dharma, worship of form has been given the ultimate importance. Yet Shankaracharya was under compulsion to advocate formless worship. At that time Buddhism had influenced the thinking people of the country. Shankaracharya began to talk about formless worship in order to reconcile vedic dharma with Buddhism. It was a compromise. Even today we are compromising. Shankaracharya began to talk about formless worship even though, by definition, there cannot be worship of something formless. How can you worship something which has no form? You can only worship something which has a form whether it be Rama, Shiva, Krishna, Hanuman, guru or a Devi such as Durga or Kali. A form is a must for worship, but Shankaracharya had to talk about formless worship to reconcile the influence of another religious stream of thought.

Despite highlighting the importance of the worship of form, Tulsidas was also forced to write about worship of the formless. Tulsidas advocated the worship of a form throughout, but nowhere did he negate or ignore worship of the formless either. He wrote in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Aguna saguna dui brahma sarūpā
Akatha agādhā anādi anūpā,*

The concept of Brahma is twofold,
Formless and with form.

Both are indescribable and immeasurable,
Without beginning and incomparable.

(BK after *do* 22)

God has no form, but every form is His form, because He is present in everything. He is the all-pervading reality. There is nowhere in this universe where God is not! In the *Bhagavad Gita* (10:20), Lord Krishna said to Arjuna: “O, conqueror of sleep, I am the Self, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and end of all beings.”

So, you can choose any form, it is up to you. Some people worship Krishna, some Rama, others worship Christ, Mohammed or Guru Maharaja. Everybody has a personal choice. Tulsidas says in *Ramacharitmanas*:

Jinha keñ rahī bhāvanā jaisī
Prabhu mūrati tinha dekhī taisī.

All saw the form of Lord Rama,
According to the feeling in their heart.

(BK after *do* 240)

Multitude of forms

To me every form is His, whether it be the form of Christ, Mohammed, Zoroaster, guru, Krishna, Rama, Devi or Durga. They are all His forms. It is absolutely wrong and unscientific to say that this is not His form. Think of the facilities which run on electricity. Whether it is a light bulb, a refrigerator, a fan or a heater, every form is a form of electrical energy. In the same way, every form is a form of divine energy. It has been said in the *Kathopanishad* (2:9):

Just as fire, having entered the world as one blaze,
Adopts the shapes of the different objects it burns,
Similarly the Atman of all living things, although one,
Assumes the form of the various objects He enters,
And yet He exists beyond also, in the formless state.

Whatever you see in this world belongs to God. This microphone is a form of electricity, sound energy. Light, cold, heat are all forms of electricity. If electricity alone has ten forms, then God Almighty is bound to have millions. It has been said in *Ramacharitamānas*:

*Premātura saba loga nihārī
Kautuka kīnha kṛpāla kharārī,
Amita rūpa pragaṭe tehi kālā
Jathā joga mile sabahi kṛpālā.*

*Kṛpādr̥ṣṭi raghubīra bilokī
Kie sakala nara nāri bisokī,
Chana mahim sabahi mile bhagavānā
Umā marama yaha kāhuñ na jānā.*

Seeing all the devotees restless with love,
Rama, who is most kind, played a trick.
At the same time He took innumerable forms,
And met with them all, according to their status.
In a moment the Lord met with all his devotees,
But, O Uma, not one of them knew this secret.

(UK after *do* 5)

How many varieties of sweets can you make out of milk alone? How many dresses can you make with cotton thread? What is the ultimate form of cotton? Is a shirt or a bed sheet the ultimate form of cotton? Whatever is made out of it, that is its form. God is present in all forms. One can worship God in any form one likes.

In this Kali Yuga, naam sankirtan is a divine path. The other path is helping others. If every single person were to light one candle for another person, how many candles would be lit in the process? With this chain reaction every house would be lit with a candle.

Ishta devata

The question is not whether God is sakara or nirakara, but whether He assumes a form of His own or whether every form is His form. Isn't His form the universal manifestation, everything that you perceive? Is God only transcendent or is He immanent? God is immanent as well as transcendent. When you say transcendent, it means nirakara, without form. When you say immanent, it means sakara, with form. Even if you say that God has no form, I still need a form. The point is very simple. I require a form and, therefore, it is my need. I must have a form of God for myself towards which I feel intense attraction. This is the meaning of the term ishta devata. The word *ishta* means I like it and *devata* means divine form. So, *ishta devata* means that divine form which I like.

I like Christ, I like Krishna, I like Rama. Some people like Sri Krishna because he was a mischievous chap, always playing and troubling others. He used to create trouble for his mother and for the community. Rama, on the other hand, was very cultured and some people like that aspect. For others, the ishta devata can be the form of Kali, Durga, Devi or Mary. You may choose whatever aspect you like, but the form has to be there. Even the cross is a form of God, not because Christ was crucified on it, but because it represents your inner, psychic body – ajna chakra, ida, pingala and sushumna. The cross is a good form to meditate on. If you concentrate on the cross, it does not make you a Christian, it makes you a sadhaka and helps you in your sadhana.

Ultimate form of God

The mind is power, but right now it is in a state of dissipation. The sunlight illuminates everything that it falls on. That same sunlight, if concentrated through a magnifying glass, can even burn. Similarly, the dissipated mind has to be channelled, concentrated and brought into focus, then it becomes powerful. So the discussion on whether God has a form or not is meaningless, as long as

your mind is in a dissipated state it needs the form. However, when you have concentrated your mind and entered the state of savikalpa and nirvikalpa samadhi, where the mind is totally one-pointed and all dualities cease to exist, then you can transcend the form. You start with the form and, when it is no longer required, you transcend it.

I must also add that the *Ramayana* doesn't accept this view, nor does the *Srimad Bhagavata* or the entire gamut of vedic religion. In these texts it is said that the ultimate form of God has form. Think about it, you do not have to believe what I say. If the ultimate form of God is a form, then what is that form? Vaishnavas say that it is Vishnu or Narayana. The Shaktas say it is Devi or Goddess. Shaivites say it is Shiva. This means that God has a form, and He also has innumerable or endless forms. We need not debate this point. The *Ramayana* has talked about this from beginning to end. It says that Rama incarnated and that the form of Rama is the same as the ultimate form.

So don't get confused or get into strife thinking about whether God has a form or is formless. Only consider whether you will be fulfilled by seeing Him with or without form. If you are fulfilled by the formless divinity, that is perfectly alright, or if you prefer to see His form, that too is okay.

Making of a form

Manu and Satarupa, husband and wife, were emperor and empress. They renounced their kingdom, went to the forest and prayed to God. Siddhis came to them, but were rejected. The Lord came to them and asked what boon they desired. Both said, "We want to see your form as a child." Just as you have baby Christ, we have baby Rama. The form of baby Rama is so dear to Lord Shiva that he always meditates on the infant Lord of about six months to one year of age.

God replied, "I am formless, I can't show you my form," but when Manu and Satarupa incarnated in their next birth, they were born as King Dasharatha and Queen Kaushalya

in Ayodhya, and Rama incarnated as their son. Even if God is formless, nameless and transcendental, which He is, at the same time you cannot confine God to formlessness. He is both formless and He has a form. There is no limitation to God. God can materialize if you can clear away the obstructions. The sum and substance is that God does incarnate and the first person who will see God will be a woman, because He is born from woman.

Which Rama do you worship? One Rama is the son of Dasharatha, another Rama is the indweller of our hearts, yet another Rama is the creator of the cosmos and yet another Rama is transcendental. The easiest, quickest, safest and best is the Rama who is the son of Dasharatha. If you go after the transcendental Rama, you might lose sight of the path. You do not know the fully charted path of the transcendental highway, so you might get lost. Just one degree south and you are in Antarctica, one degree north and you are in the Arctic instead of in London. Yes, this amazing spectacle of the world is created by Rama, and that Rama is in me and I am in him.

Four forms

A sannyasin should not debate about worship of God with form or without form. Instead he should worship deities, gods and goddesses according to his religion and tradition. It is a very simple technique. Take a rose in your hand. Look at it, then close your eyes and visualize it. Now tell me what is the difference between the real flower and your mental image of that flower? One is gross and the other is subtle. The form becomes subtle. The Rama whom you see in the stone sculpture in the temple is the gross, visible form, but the same Rama takes a subtle form when one sees him at a supramental, transcendental level. In that dimension of perception the ordinary consciousness evolves to such a state that it becomes extinct.

One Rama is the son of Dasharatha, one Rama dwells in the hearts of all, one Rama has created the world and one

Rama is beyond all of these. These are the four stages. Open your eyes and you see one Rama with the physical eyes. Close your eyes and you see his mental image. The raw material of the Rama seen by the physical eyes is stone or marble. The raw material of the Rama seen by the mental eye is mind. When one goes beyond these into the deeper dimensions, then the raw material is not even mind. In that state the 'I' ends. Swami Satyananda becomes extinct; his form, name and identity vanish.

In this stage the raw material of that Rama is neither the marble nor the mind, but it is the product of the supramental, intuitive consciousness. That Rama is like an incarnated form. There is yet one more Rama who appears in such a state of consciousness where the mind dissolves, the senses are left behind and even the 'I' and 'you' consciousness melts away. In that dimension of awareness, where no duality is left, Rama is seen not as a statue of stone, a mental picture or an intellectual concept, but as transcendental.

Immanent and transcendental

In our vedic philosophy God is seen in two forms, immanent as well as transcendental. You start with immanence, God with form. In that form the raw material is marble or whatever, but when you close your eyes, suddenly you go into a different dimension and you see Him there inside. What is the basic material then? Not the marble, but your own self, your own mind, your own concept, your own thought.

Now your whole mind has concentrated into the form of Sri Rama. As you go on using the limited, finite properties of the mind, it becomes more and more subtle, but still the form of Rama remains. What is the basic material then? Is it marble, gold, mind? No. As the consciousness changes, 'I', ego, duality drop and there is neither you nor me. I am not aware that I am meditating. I am not aware of time, space, or even the process of meditation. There is no trikuti, no awareness of the meditator or the meditation. There is no

awareness of anything, but Rama remains. Somebody sees him, somebody is witnessing, somebody is experiencing. What is the basic material of that?

It is foolish to say that it is not good to worship a form. You have to start your sadhana with a form. It need not be Rama. Rama is a name that represents the highest reality. In English it is called God, in Persian Allah. Vedantins call it Brahman, and others call it Paramatma or Rama. As there is one Rama, which Rama do I mean? I mean the Rama who is the son of Dasharatha. I mean the Rama who is the indweller of all hearts. I mean the Rama who is the creator of the sun, moon, stars and the whole cosmos, and I also mean the Rama who transcends everything. It's a simple thing.

The wedding bait

Marriage means romance and love. Even if philosophically, you take Rama and Sita's marriage as a symbol of the union of jivatma and paramatma, or consider it like any worldly marriage, as most people would, the madhurya bhava is very much present. Divine eroticism is definitely represented. The Upanishads also tell us that the union of the jivatma and paramatma expresses bliss, and bliss is a *rasa*, a transcendental experience.

In the past my intellect was distorted. I used to think that the jivatma had gone to unite with the paramatma, that the ten heads of Ravana symbolized the sense organs, his twenty hands represented the *vruttis*, the mental fluctuations, and his navel was the lotus centre of desires, *vasanas*. I interpreted, taught and wrote in this way, but today the Lord appears to me as He appears to ordinary folk. He is the one who was born in Ayodhya.

Lord Rama has been defined in various ways. One Rama is the son of Dasharatha, one Rama is the indweller of all beings, one Rama has created this world, and one Rama is different from all these aspects. I am not concerned with the three forms of Rama as they are difficult for me to think

about. I find them impractical and too intellectual. I like the first Rama. I close my eyes and see Him as the blue-limbed, dusky-complexioned, soft-bodied Lord.

My story is strange. I have been a devotee of Sri Rama from childhood. Born into the Ikshvaku family line, I inherited everything of the *suryavansha*, the lineage of the sun. Therefore, I keep all the symbols, the heirlooms of the family. I am a *shastradhaari* as well as a *shaastradhari*, I carry weapons with me as well as the holy scriptures in my memory. That is why, when my guru gave me the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*, I was in a fix. I asked him, "How do I reconcile the two Lords?" My guru said, "Never mind, meditate on Rama and chant the mantra of Shiva." I obey his command; I play a double role. Inside I am with Sri Rama and my mouth chants Shiva's mantra. There is no difference. The best part is that when I meditate on Sri Rama, Lord Shiva is highly pleased. When I say, *Om Namah Shivaya*, Sri Rama becomes very happy. Thus Sri Rama is happy and Lord Shiva, too, is happy. behold joy, I get sweets in both hands.

Intellectuals should not go near God. Aurobindo said, "Intellect was the helper, intellect is the barrier, transcend intellect. Reason was the helper, reason is the barrier, transcend reason." Aurobindo has written that reason is a big impediment on the path to God. Therefore, my Rama is the son of King Dasharatha. I keep Sri Rama in front of my eyes. My Sita is the Sita of Sitamarhi, found in the fields of Mithila when it was being ploughed.

The simple truth that I want to point out is that the path of catching God, of experiencing, remembering and submerging oneself in God, of melting your mind in God, is the one and only path. Take the easiest and simplest path. Don't bother about the hard one, don't take the path of the razor's edge. The claim that the easy and simple path is long is correct. Sometimes it will also take you over mountainous terrain. The other path may be short while the easy path makes you walk on and on. It is the path of the ant. Like the ant you go on walking slowly but steadily. In 1947 my guru

asked me to wait for forty more years. He said, “Your time is yet to come. You have many karmas to finish.” So I started walking slowly and steadily.

Therefore, Sita’s marriage is definitely like the common marriage that we are familiar with. However, the marriage did not take place between two ordinary human beings. This couple were divinities who incarnated in human form to perform the leela. Rama was not an ordinary human like us. His divine qualities are expressed in the following verse of *Sri Nama Ramayanam*.

*Shuddha Brahma paraatpara Raama,
Kaalaatmaka parameshwara Raama,
Sheshatalpa sukhanidrita Raama,
Brahmadyamara prarthita Raama,
Chandrakiranankula mandana Raama,
Srimad Dasharatha nandana Raama,
Kaushalya sukhavardhana Raama.*

He was Rama, the *parabrahman*, the immaculate, pure parameshwara. He was Rama, the *kala atma*, the universal soul. He was Rama the Supreme Being. He was Rama reclining on the bed of the serpent king. He was Rama worshipped by the gods, including Brahma. He was Rama bathed in moonlight. He was Rama, the son of Dasharatha and Kaushalya, the treasure of ascending bliss for them.

Thus Rama was divinity descended to Earth in human form. You should see him as the hero depicted in *Rama-charitamanas*. Just grasp him simply with a pure and open heart. Do not bother too much about symbolism and its interpretation. Do not hanker too much to understand him intellectually, because the more you do the deeper you will sink into confusion. I am telling you this from my own experience. It is good to listen to stories about God and to talk about Him because His stories inspire us. When you come to sadhana, you should be naive and simple like a child. You should have the heart of a child, pure and

uncomplicated. You should have the feelings of a child towards God.

Do not think that God is omniscient and marriage symbolizes the marriage of jivatma and paramatma, and so on. You should not do that. Bhagavan Shiva is my ishta devata and I do want to lure him here. Shiva was present when Lord Rama was born. When Lord Rama married, again Shiva made a point of being there. So, when the wedding is taking place, there is every possibility of Shiva coming down in our midst. If that happens, then the purpose of the celestial marriage will most certainly be achieved. The marriage is bait to attract Lord Shiva.

I wonder if I should use the word ‘bait’? It is true that Shiva did attend the marriage of Sri Rama along with his retinue of gods and goddesses in the past, and if he comes again to attend the wedding here in Rikhia, even if you do not recognize him it doesn’t matter. Even if you cannot see him, it won’t matter because once he comes down he will definitely leave behind a trail of his fragrant blessings. This is a certainty. We may not recognize him as we are all blind. The Lord is very much present, but we have cataracts in our eyes and nobody wants to undergo an operation. In fact, there is no one to perform the operation either.

Therefore, I have been sitting here these last six or seven years, waiting to undergo the operation. In Balakanda of *Ramacharitamanas* it is said: *Gurupada raja mridu manjula anjana; Nayana amia driga dosha vibhanjana* – “Nearness to the guru’s feet removes ignorance and provides wisdom.” A cataract is an error in perception. Now the cataract is being removed and there is some restoration of vision. Although blurry, at least some vision is there. It does not matter if I see a blurred vision of Shankarji. If he gives a radiant darshan that, too, is most welcome. If he is seen as a spark or as a light, that is alright. If he appears like Varuna, still it is welcome. Any form is welcome, as God does not appear in one particular form. My Lord you have no form, but for my meditation I worship you with form.

Sakara worship

There is an immeasurable quantity of water in the ocean, but you can take away only as much as your container will hold. Similarly, you can only grasp God to the extent and depth of your awareness, feelings, soul, personality and the totality of yourself. Swami Satyananda could not grasp the formless, nirakara God then, nor can he do it now, nor will he ever have that capacity. Swami Satyananda's capacity is limited to lighting a lamp and an incense stick in front of Ganesha's image and singing his praises as follows:

*Jai Ganesha, jai Ganesha, jai Ganesha deva
Mata jaki Parvati pita mahadeva
Phool chadhe pan chadhe aur chadhe meva
Laddoo on ke bhog chadhe santa kare seva.*

Therefore, worship God according to the capacity of your intellect and feelings. Adopt a pooja which delights your heart and can move and melt it. The chosen deity is called ishta devata, because it is what your heart opts for, what your heart wishes for. It is that God who enthralls and captivates your imagination. So, read *Ramacharitamanas* devoutly, profoundly and with understanding. Tulsidas has illustrated this point throughout *Ramacharitamanas*. In fact, this is the theme of *Ramacharitamanas*. The nirakara becomes sakara. The formless God becomes manifest in a recognizable form.

Tulsidas has not neglected the nirakara aspect of God, *Sohamasmi iti vritti akhanda*, which means continuous awareness of *Soham*. Tulsidas talks about both the God with attributes and the unattainable *kaivalyapada*, the path of final liberation. But the important point he makes is that worship or *upasana* of God means to set your heart on any aspect of God that attracts and satisfies you, that is within the grasp of your limited awareness, that stirs your feelings and sustains your interest.

Although I am not a very high soul myself, I know that however depraved and fallen a man may be, he always looks up to a person who is great and good. He never worships

another fallen man or villain, he is drawn only to a virtuous hero. He himself may be a complete rascal, but he accepts only a virtuous hero as his ideal in life. The best example of goodness in humanity is none other than Sri Rama. Sage Narada told Valmiki that in the whole history of the human race only one ideal man had reigned supreme and that was Sri Rama. *Ikshvaku vanshaja prabhu Rama nama janahi sutah.* Rama was born in the Ikshvaku family and was the epitome of virtue, heroism, power, intelligence and character.

I had Sri Rama as my ishta because whatever you worship and meditate upon seeps into your inner being. It casts a long indelible imprint on your consciousness, which passes from birth to birth. You may remain a villain, a bad character, a rogue, in the present lifetime, but there is every possibility of reaching and realizing your ideal ishta in some birth sooner or later. No one should have a doubt about nirakara coming down into sakara. Let it be very simple. Choose the form of your ishta devata and worship him or her, ring the bell, read the holy books, light a candle and an incense stick, praise him or her and quietly go to bed. Most certainly God will bless you.



4

Bhakti

Bhakti is the ultimate point of fusion, when you split the atom and explode the nucleus. The ultimate point is *bhakti*, devotion, love. Bhakti is not religious devotion where you go to a temple or church, say prayers, offer flowers and do pooja. That is not real devotion which has to come from the heart. Bhakti is an expression of *bhavana*, feeling from the heart; it is not a product of the intellect.

I will explain what I mean by feeling. What happens when you feel anxious and worried? You think about the same difficulty all the time. Even while eating, the mind suddenly reverts to it. Why? Because you have experienced some trauma or calamity, and that feeling comes back again and again. So, you have the awareness of that feeling. This awareness is in everyone, in the whole of creation, in all humankind, in all animals.

You do not have to produce feelings. Everyone experiences them to the fullest degree. You can see it in the family members when they fight. When the eldest son dies, the parents never sit down calmly and say, "Well, our son is dead, now what shall we do?" They start crying, breaking their heads, and doing all kinds of things. Bhavana is fully developed in every being. You do not have to do anything to develop it. That is why you hate and why you love.

The intellect is discerning, but bhavana is blind. A girl falls in love with a boy. She thinks he is the only fellow of

worth, the most comely young man, the ideal lover, as if there are no other boys in the world. Bhavana here is a limited concept. The feeling creates a limit and immediately a circle is drawn around it. The girl thinks that he is the most handsome boy, as if no other exists. Similarly, the boy thinks that she is the most beautiful girl, even though God has produced millions of attractive women.

Bhavana is inward, not outward. Because a circle is drawn, it limits the flow of thoughts and feelings to the object of emotion. It intensifies and unites the feeling. You have to streamline your bhavana. Instead of directing it towards fear, anger, animosity, hatred, *maya*, illusion and *moha*, attachment, you have to direct it towards God. When you can love him as you would love your boyfriend or girlfriend, God will be there. He will come immediately. Tulsidas says in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Jāke hṛdayaṁ bhagati jasi prīti
Prabhu tahaṁ pragaṭa sadā tehiṁ rīti,
Hari byāpaka sarbatra samānā
Prema teṁ pragaṭa hohiṁ maiṁ jānā.*

*Desa kāla disi bidisiḥ māhīn
Kahahu so kahāṁ jahāṁ prabhu nāhīn,
Aga jagamaya saba rahita birāgī
Prema teṁ prabhu pragaṭai jimi āgī.*

In whose heart, there is love of Divine nature
There the Lord manifests, as it is His nature.
God pervades everywhere alike.
It is known that He manifests out of love.
Tell me the place, time or direction
Where there is absence of the Lord.
He pervades the ones with or without money
And yet He is apart and without attachment.
God manifests himself out of love
As fire manifests out of friction.

(BK after *do* 184)

The last pronouncement in *Ramacharitamanas* is the most beautiful and correct:

do – *Kāmihi nāri piāri jimi lobhihi priya jimi dāma,*
Timi raghunātha nirantara lāgahu mohi rāma.

Even as a lustful man loves a woman,
Or a miserly man loves money,
May I love God.

(UK do 130 *kha*)

There is nothing beyond that. You cannot realize anything unless you are mad after it. If I suffer from Rama psychosis, well and good; Sri Krishna neurosis, well and good. Tell me, what is the use of suffering from fear psychosis or neurosis, or from sex mania? It is better to have some good mania, so that you get something positive from it.

Power of bhakti

Bhakti is the pinnacle of spiritual life, not jnana. How do you know whether what you read in books is right or wrong? The person who wrote the book may also have speculated that the universe is like this or like that. The writers have no objective evidence. They just philosophize and we believe it. We may like their way of writing, but it is pure speculation. You can't prove that it is right, as there is no proof that it is.

Maya and bhakti are both feminine aspects. Yoga, dispassion and renunciation are masculine. This maya fascinates yogis. The dispassionate ones are charmed and so are the renunciates. If their emotions are directed towards bhakti, they are not captivated, because maya cannot cast her spell on bhakti. She may attract renunciation and dispassion, because they are masculine, but bhakti is not charmed. Tulsidas has described this in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Ihāñ na pacchapāta kachu rākhauñ
Beda purāna santa mata bhāṣauñ,

*Moha na nāri nāri kem rūpā
Pannagāri yaha rīti anūpā.*

*Māyā bhagati sunahu tumha doū
Nāri barga jānai saba koū,
Puni raghubīrahi bhagati piārī
Māyā khalu nartakī bicārī.*

*Bhagatihi sānukūla raghurāyā
Tāte tehi ḍarapati ati māyā,
Rāma bhagati nirupama nirupādhi
Basai jāsu ura sadā abādhi.*

*Tehi biloki māyā sakucāi
Kari na sakai kachu nija prabhutāi,
Asa bicārī je muni bigyānī
Jācahim bhagati sakala sukha khānī.*

I am not showing partiality here
But saying what the Vedas, Puranas and saints have said.
O enemy of serpents, this is a peculiar rule
That a woman is not charmed to see a woman.
All know that Bhakti and Maya are both feminine,
And also that Bhakti is very dear to Rama,
While poor Maya is only a dancer.
Seeing Rama favouring Bhakti,
Maya is very much afraid of her.
In whose heart the Bhakti of Rama
Is eternally present,
Incomparable and without devious design,
Maya feels shy to approach him
And fails to exercise her powers.
Thinking thus, the munis and realized persons
Pay obeisance to Bhakti,
Who is the source of all happiness.

(UK after *do* 115)

He also says that one who offends a devotee is sure to be burnt by the fire of Rama's wrath.

Feeling versus intellect

One aspect of man is rational and intellectual, but he has heart and emotions also. I keep on repeating this every day. The heart is the centre of emotions, with which you love, hate and envy others. Anger does not come from the intellect; it comes from the emotions. Love does not come from the intellect; it comes from the heart. So, man has two qualities within him, intellect and emotion.

Emotions are directly related to feelings. You treat some people as friends and some as enemies. This is related to feeling and emotion. You love your parents, give them respect and look after them, while you term other people as useless. This again is an expression of your emotions. The emotions or feelings make man religious or spiritual. The intellect can make man learned, a great scholar or mathematician, but it cannot make him religious or spiritual. Intellect can make you an Einstein or Newton, but not a *bhakta*, or a devotee. To develop bhakti, it is essential to develop your emotions, and keep them healthy and positive. Blind faith and experiential faith are manifestations of emotion and feeling. The poet Tulsidas says that Goddess Bhavani and Lord Shankara are symbols of one's faith and belief.

*Bhavānīśaṅkarau vande śraddhāviśvāsarūpiṇau
Yābhyāṁ vinā na paśyanti siddhāḥ svāntaḥ sthamīśvaram*

I bow down to Parvati and Lord Shiva
Who are embodiments of faith and trust.
Without them, even the adept cannot perceive God,
Although He dwells within them all.

(BK sloka 2)

Blind faith is a label people have given to certain feelings. From my personal experience, I cannot call such feelings the result of blind faith. I have obtained a lot of enlightenment from this so-called blind faith. Actually, I have a lot of blind faith. I have just married a tulsi plant to a shaligram. I made

all the arrangements with loving care. I got jewellery and finery and distributed sweets. What would you call this? An educated man marrying a tulsi plant to a stone?

I liked doing this. I do not know anything about meaning. I liked decorating the plant with flowers, and putting candles all around. I asked for only one boon, “Mother, as long as I can take your name with total devotion, keep me healthy.”

One should not lose the habit of asking from one’s mother. This is the normal relationship with mother. That is why I asked for complete health. If I fall sick even for one day, my anushtana gets disturbed and it breaks. While doing my sadhana for the last five years I used to be apprehensive lest I got dehydrated because the temperature around the panchagni used to go up to sixty or seventy degrees celsius. This was not easy, especially for a person used to air conditioning, but nothing adverse happened. I was not indisposed even for one day, not even for a sneeze! The Lord had taken care of me for five years. That is why I tell the Lord that, “The day my devotion to you wavers, take me away from this world with a heart attack.” Just as food is not tasty without spices, likewise human life is useless without bhakti. One could as well be a dog or a donkey. It has been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Jinha haribhagati hṛdayaṁ nahim ānī
Jīvata sava samāna tei prānī,
Jo nahim karai rāma guna gānā
Jīha so dādura jīha samānā.*

(BK after *do* 112)

*Rāma nāma binu girā na sohā
Dekhu bicāri tyāgi mada mohā,
Basana hīna nahim soha surārī
Saba bhūṣana bhūṣita bara nārī.*

In whose heart there is no devotion for Hari,
His life is like that of a dead body.

He who does not sing the name of God,
His tongue is comparable to that of a frog.
Speech is never decorative without the name of Rama.
Think it over, see it, abandoning pride and delusion.
O enemy of the gods, a beautiful lady
Adorned with ornaments, but devoid of dress,
Can never be pleasing to the eye.

(SK after *do* 22)

Duality is joy

When I look back on all that I have achieved, I am amazed.
How could an ordinary person like me, a man with limited
knowledge, means and intellect, do and say all this? Only
through Divine will. God's will is operating.

Through this process of realization, when the ego
begins to diminish, you may not see God, but you certainly
begin to perceive the Divine will. Once you see the Divine
will, then you know that you have come slightly closer to
God. The distance remains, but it will diminish by and by,
kilometre by kilometre. One day the gap will close and you
will merge with God. However, I do not want to become one
with God. I want to continue to see Him and want Him to
continue to see me. Once I merge into God it will not be so
enjoyable.

The enjoyment is in *dvaita*, duality. When you are
separate from God, you enjoy it. But when you meet with
Him, when you merge in Him, where is the bliss? This
difference, this *bhedabhakti*, is a sutra of bhakti marga. In
Ramacharitamānas, Garuda asks Kakabhushundi:

Kāraṇa kavāna deha yaha pāi
Tāta sakala mohi kahahu bujhāi,

O dear one, tell me everything
And explain how you got your present body?

(UK after *do* 93)

Kakabhushundi replies:

*Japa tapa makha sama dama brata dānā
Birati bibeka joga bigyānā,
Saba kara phala raghupati pada premā
Tehi binu kou na pāvai chemā.*

*Ehim tana rāma bhagati maini pāi
Tāte mohi mamatā adhikāi,*

Austerity, yajna, control of mind and senses,
Charity, non-attachment, discrimination,
Yoga and true knowledge
Are the fruits of devotion to Rama's feet,
Without which none can enjoy permanent security.
It was in this body that I was blessed
With devotion to Rama,
So I have a special liking for this body.

(UK after *do* 94)

He says bhakti to Rama was awakened in the heart of that particular body.

*Rāma bhagati ehim tana ura jāmī
Tāte mohi parama priya svāmī,
Tajauñ na tana nija icchā maranā
Tana binu beda bhajana nahim baranā.*

On that account, O Master,
This form is extremely dear to me.
Although my death depends on my will,
Still I do not quit this body,
For, according to the Vedas,
Remembrance of the Lord is not possible
Without a physical body.

(UK after *so* 95)

The main thread of bhakti yoga is the difference between God and man. Therefore, I do not say that I am God,

although this is written in the Upanishads. Sometime, maybe, I may have that experience also. I cannot say, because it is not in my hands. But I do not have the experience that I am God.

Ishk hakiki

According to Sufism, love is of two kinds. *Ishk* means 'love'. One may be in love with anybody or anything: the moon, vegetation, animals, human beings, music, flowers, pilgrimage places, saints and sages, or children. So the sufis categorized love into two kinds: One is *ishk hakiki*, meaning 'love with truth'. The word *hak* means 'truth'. In the Persian language, *satya*, 'truth', is called *hak*. The second kind of love is *ishk mizazi*. The word *mizazi* means 'worldly'. Thus *ishk mizazi* is the love for things and being belonging to this material world.

Ishk hakiki is love for the eternal truth. Truth is defined as everlasting and eternal. Things that come and go are worldly. *Ishk mizazi* is love for worldly things like flowers, music, dance, literature, human beings, children, which come and go, are born and also die. Today you love them and tomorrow they may no longer exist. Love for such things cannot be called everlasting or eternal. Love for all the divine things, like God, *satsang*, scripture or humanity, differs from love for worldly things. Some people find great joy in reading the *Ramayana*, performing *pooja*, or visiting pilgrimage places. In *ishk hakiki* a person may undergo a lot of suffering, but still feel happy.

Sita was brought up in an atmosphere of enormous prosperity, love and comfort. Her feet were so tender because she had never placed them on the ground. In *Ramacharitamanas* Sita has been described as follows:

Leaving the back of the bed, lap or swing,
Sita has never put her foot on the hard earth.

But she loved her husband, Lord Rama, so intensely that she preferred to go with him to the forest with bare feet,

rather than remain in the palace, enjoying royal comfort. This is called *ishk hakiki*. If you try to walk on the road with bare feet for a few miles, you will get blisters, because there is no love in your heart and no motivation to walk. Sita walked with and for Rama, her husband, whom she loved from the depths of her heart. In *Ramacharitamanas* again it has been said:

Rama walked in front and Lakshman followed,
Both wearing the dress of an ascetic.
In between Sita appeared to move gracefully,
As Maya lies between Brahma and Jiva.
Sita stepped in between the footprints of Lord Rama,
And walked the distance as if unafraid.
Lakshman stepped right or left of them,
Being attentive not to place his feet
On the footprints of either Sita or Rama.

Love for God is called divine love in English or *ishk hakiki* in Persian, or *bhakti* in Sanskrit.

Vairagya and tapasya

The story of Rama and Sita, which includes the entire gamut of events and emotions we experience in our daily lives, is only the skeleton. In that skeleton, the *Ramayana* tells us how to practise *vairagya* and *tapasya*, dispassion and austerity. Why do we have to practise *vairagya* and *tapasya*? Are these two qualities necessary and, more importantly, are they possible to develop? What relationship does *bhakti* have with all this? When you turn towards the west, your back is towards the east. So when you turn towards *bhakti*, where is your evil mind? *Bhakti* is the fulfilment, the consummation. Just as the rivers that flow down from the mountains ultimately meet the ocean, similarly, all good karmas are contained in *bhakti*.

Bhakti does not relate to the mind, but to the heart and emotion. It is through emotion that you hate or love. Passion and hatred are emotions. Similarly, *vairagya* is an emotion. *Tapasya* is also an outcome of emotion. When you practise

bhakti, you are already practising tapasya, so it is not necessary for you to find the relationship between bhakti, tapasya and vairagya. According to the *Ramayana*, total devotion to God in any form fulfils all your spiritual requirements. The spiritual requirements of *ahimsa*, non-violence, *satya*, truthfulness, *brahmacharya*, sexual abstinence, *asteya*, honesty, *aparigraha*, non-possessiveness, *tapasya*, austerity and *vairagya*, dispassion are all fulfilled in bhakti. Therefore, it is very important to develop bhakti towards God.

Easy path

I have read *Ramacharitamanas* so many times. If you want to know how many times, then I would have to consult my diary. I used to sit at midnight and I would finish it the next day at four in the morning. I would rest for one day then begin reading the whole book from beginning to end again, because in bhakti it is necessary to detach the mind from the world and attach it to God.

I tried to establish a connection with God, but at last I became tired and thought that with God I could have only one relationship – “You be the master and I will be the servant. I will walk the way You make me walk. Whatever You tell me to do I will do. If You put me in hell I am prepared to go to hell as well. If You want to send me to heaven I am prepared to go to heaven. I am seventy-five years old, but if You tell me to marry a twenty-five year old girl I will do it fearlessly. Why? Because all is Your will, O Mother. Thy will be done my Lord.” God’s will has to be accepted as your own will.

The path of bhakti is the easiest because here you operate with emotions, with faith and belief. It is not the path of pranayama, it is not the path of kundalini, it is not the path of hatha yoga, karma yoga or jnana yoga. It is the path of ‘self yoga’ – everything is within me. I mobilize my willpower and the God within me is awakened.

Bhagavad Gita

In the *Bhagavad Gita* it says that non-action is action. Non-action is action when one is in active life. But when you have renounced life, then these rules of the *Bhagavad Gita* no longer apply. The *Bhagavad Gita* relates to an active person who is dealing with the problems of life, family and society. It does not concern me at all. For me, the *Bhagavad Gita* is irrelevant, and I do not believe that any path can take me further except that of bhakti yoga. Action, inaction, they are all a jugglery of words and expressions. The essential thing is love, devotion, merging of the mind, awareness of God all the time, not thinking of anybody else, not thinking of friends, not thinking of disciples. It has been said in the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* (25–26):

Divine love is even greater
Than the yoga of action,
The yoga of wisdom
And the yoga of meditation,
For it is their excellent fruition.

In *Ramacharitamanas*, Shiva says to Parvati:

do – *Umā joga japa dāna tapa nānā makha brata nema*
Rāma kṛpā nahim karahim tasi jasi niṣkevala prema

O Parvati,
Rama does not bless me with His grace,
Because of performance of yoga, japa,
Austerities, rituals and yajna.
It comes on account of love,
Love for Him and Him alone.

(LK do 117 kha)

Parabhakti

Bhakti does not need to be cultivated or defined. Bhakti is present in everyone. Bhakti is an all-pervading essence in all living beings, not only human beings.

*Janma koṭi lagi ragara hamārī
Barauñ sambhu na ta rahauñ kuārī,*

Love is not done, it happens.
This fire is not blown up in flames,
It blows up itself abruptly.

(BK after *do* 80)

Bhakti has to do with feeling. The feeling for God is bhakti. The feeling for one's enemy is revenge. The feeling for a girl is passion. The feeling for money is greed. They are all feelings. When your feeling goes towards God, it is called bhakti. The same feeling which emanates from a mother towards a child is affection or *sneha*. When it is directed towards a friend, it is friendship. Whether paternal, maternal or fraternal, they all are feelings.

You do not have to be told how to develop your feelings. You only have to be taught how to direct your feelings. It is only the channelling of feeling which is required. Bhakti is natural. It is absolutely natural for everyone. All you have to do is change the direction of the flow. The same feeling which was running towards jealousy, anger, greed and passion has to be redirected and then it becomes bhakti. Throughout history there have been many people who were wretched, passionate and debauched, but something happened in their lives and within a second, within the twinkling of an eye, they became great bhaktas. They did not have to develop that love, because it was already in them. It was only misdirected or misguided.

You must have heard the story of Saint Tulsidas. What was the intensity of his emotions? He was blinded by love for his wife. He crossed a river in the middle of the night, riding on a dead body, amidst heavy rain, just to see her at her parents' house. When he finally reached her, she spoke harsh words to him which shocked him. Her harsh comments completely transformed his life and overnight his bhakti developed. This devotion already existed inside him, but it

was directed towards his wife. When she gave him this mighty push, the direction of his bhakti changed. She was just the medium. It has also been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Collect the threads of attachment
To parents, wife, children, relatives,
Body, wealth, property and family.
Twist them together to make a rope,
And mentally tie it to my feet.

Bhakti is a feeling. It has nothing to do with pooja or religious ceremonies. That is all ritual, physical actions, but that is not the definition of bhakti.

Bhakti is like the feeling the mother has for her child, the feeling the lover has for the beloved, the feeling one enemy has for another. The same intensity of feeling is experienced in bhakti. Intensity of bhakti is called *para bhakti*, transcendental devotion. Para bhakti and jnana are one and the same. Para bhakti means supreme devotion when there is intensity. It is not lukewarm love, it is so overpowering that nothing else exists in your mind. A devotee has said:

Love is that secret truth
Which is understood,
But cannot be explained.

This kind of bhakti does not depend on destiny or on horoscopes. It does not depend on anyone but Him. If He wants to, He will give you that intense love. Bhakti can only be gained by the grace of God, not from the scriptures and not by any practice. No method exists to attain para bhakti. You may go on pilgrimages, visit temples, fast, have satsang with your guru and do pooja. This will awaken mild bhakti and you will begin to feel good, but it will not be para bhakti.

Para bhakti is not ordinary love. It is extremely intense bhakti. It is the divine love which Mirabai, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and many others realized. For twenty-four

hours of the day, whether eating, drinking, sleeping or awake, they were lost in this love. This state of parabhakti can be attained only through God's grace. There is no other way mentioned in the shastras.

How can para bhakti be developed? When I am asked this, I do not reply, because I do not know the answer. I don't think anybody knows the answer. It depends totally on God's grace. Just as the chatak bird keeps its beak constantly open, waiting for the raindrops to fall from *Swati Nakshatra*, a particular constellation of heavenly bodies, you must keep your heart forever open. Maybe the drops of God's grace will one day descend on you. Parvati also practised penance and waited millennia for Lord Shiva:

I may try and try through crores of births,
But I will marry Lord Shiva
Or remain unmarried forever.

Hanumanji also says:

O Lord, the real adversity is when
Your name is unremembered or unsung.

Eye of the heart

The heart is the universe. There are two important things that you should remember; one is the heart, the other is the intellect. The heart is the creative principle and the intellect is the destructive principle. The heart is the way to God and the intellect is the way to the devil. You can see it in the modern world. Even in your personal life, you will find you are closer to your family, to your friends, to your relatives, only through the heart. If you are close to somebody through the intellect, it is only for selfish motives. If you have selfish motives, you talk nicely. You say, "You are my dear; I like you," and so on. However, you have your own purpose, which is from the brain, the head.

The heart is free from selfishness. It is the source of the most important quality which is sacrifice, selflessness. A

mother is selfless, God is selfless, guru is selfless, because they operate at the level of heart. Leaders of a country are not selfless, because they operate through the intellect, through dialectical methods. If anybody in the world wants to approach God, to have any connection or relationship with God, intellect is the barrier. You will have to transcend intellect, reasoning and logic. Intellect can be helpful to some extent, but it becomes a barrier at a certain point and you will have to transcend it.

How can anybody believe that you can understand God through the intellect? Maybe you can discuss God through the intellect, but you cannot feel Him. The intellect cannot realize or feel God. It is beyond the capacity of an intellectual. There are many great thinkers in the world, many intellectuals who can write book after book, but they have never had the faintest experience of the Divine. To have an experience of God or of the whole universe, the absolute totality, you need heart. You can express your feelings through the heart. What is feeling? Love, hatred, passion, sacrifice and anger are feelings. You feel them; you do not see them. Similarly, you cannot see God. You cannot say, "Show me God, then I will believe in Him." No, God has to be felt.

God has to be felt just as a mother's love or a friend's love is felt. The feeling of friendliness or even hatred is called *bhava*. It is an attitude of heart. Man has various attitudes in him which are fully matured. You do not have to learn how to develop your heart. Every human being, whether a saint or an ordinary person, a child, a young lady, an old man or even an infant of two years, has a fully developed heart, because they can feel love, pain, animosity and hatred. You do not have to develop feelings; they are natural for every living being, not only human beings. Trees and animals have feelings. It is the natural tendency of every living being to react; chemicals react. This reaction to each other is an outcome of feeling.

You have asked about the relationship between the universe and the heart. It is such a small question, but in

order to get to the root of it, the most important thing that you have to understand is that God is the centre of the universe. The heart is the eye through which you can see Him. You will never be able to see Him without heart. You may study the scriptures, Puranas, Koran and Bible, but it will be to no avail. You can only see God through the eyes of your heart. The same God is the centre, the inner soul, of the universe and the totality of the universe. God and the universe are identical; there is absolutely no difference. In *Ramacharitamanas* it has been said:

Knowing the whole world
Is pervaded by Sita and Rama,
I bow down to it, folding both my hands.

To love humanity and God

Religion is not union, it is reunion. It is not two becoming one, but the one who became two becoming one again. The jiva, the individual soul, you and me, and the entire cosmos are essentially a spark of Ishwara, the divine, just as light and heat are a spark of the sun. Therefore, the individual is essentially immortal, pure and full of happiness, but we experience none of that. We experience mortality, impurity, gloom and unhappiness.

Rama represents the Absolute. The words God, Allah, Buddha or Jehovah represent the Absolute because that nameless God, that nameless substance must be named so that we may understand it. We have to call him something and, therefore, we give him a name, A, B, C or D.

Sita is the individual soul and a demon has kidnapped her. Yes, our Sita has been kidnapped and she is being held in Lanka. Ravana, the demon king has ten heads and twenty arms, and is extremely powerful. He lives in Lanka, the city of gold. This is not a myth. It is the reality within you and me and within everything. The *karmendriyas*, the five senses of action, and the *jnanendriyas*, the five senses of awareness, are the ten heads of Ravana. It is through the senses that

we perceive, cognize and realize an object of enjoyment, pleasure and beauty. The ten senses each have two attitudes, positive and negative. That makes up the twenty arms of Ravana. The eyes can see good and they can also see bad. The nose can smell right and it can smell wrong. The ears can hear well and they can hear ill. Every sense, every *indriya*, has a double attitude, positive and negative, and they constitute the twenty hands of the demon Ravana, who has kidnapped Sita, the individual soul.

Sita has to be freed from the clutches of Ravana, but what will free her? Austerity? No! Renunciation? No! Sacrifice? No! There is only one who can free her, and that is God himself. Nobody and nothing short of God himself can make you free. Of course, you should practise yoga, do pooja, say prayers, sing kirtan and perform austerities. You should be good, you should be kind, you should be pure, but that is not the certain way. The only certain way to be freed from the clutches of that demon king, Ravana, is through God. But how do you ask him to free you? If you knew his telephone number, you could dial him, and say, "God, I have been kidnapped here, please take me away." But you don't have his telephone number.

I don't know his telephone number, but there is a hot line between God and me. That hot line is bhakti, love and devotion for God and for mankind at the same time. To love humanity is to love God. To love both humanity and God is complete love.

Follow the heart

In the past I also thought everything in the *Ramayana* was symbolic. I took Ravana, the exile, Ayodhya, Janakapuri and everything to be allegorical and figurative representations, but not any longer. If I take them as symbols now, my sadhana comes to nothing, it is in vain. Now I think of Rama just as Tulsidas and Valmiki have presented him. I don't accept Rama in the spiritual context as he is painted in the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. I gave plenty of discourses on

their symbolic significance, for example, how the ten heads of Ravana were our ten senses, and so on. It is a science of scriptural discourse. A sadhaka should take Rama as a *sakara purusha*, a factual man. Kakabhushundi tells us that Rama and Sita have been consistently the same throughout all their incarnations, as described in the different mythologies of various epochs. The rest of the gods and goddesses appeared in a variety of hues in different times and incarnations. Today I believe in this principle only.

I started my spiritual quest at the age of eighteen or nineteen. I studied a lot, but today, at this age, everything has become very straightforward and simple. Asking questions like this is nothing but intellectual jugglery, brainstorming. Don't waste your time and effort. After all, what you should really care about is Rama's blessing and grace, having the good fortune of Rama's darshan in this beautiful human form and your faith in him becoming deeper and deeper. Sitaji's beautiful character should move our hearts and bring tears to our eyes, our hearts should become softer and softer, more and more tender, and slowly we should merge in the *nirakara*, the formless.

Knowledge and erudition are not going to help us. You feed the donkey and gain neither merit nor demerit, it is a wasted act. Similarly, one goes on giving satsang on the *Ramayana*, deciphering the inner meaning, explaining the symbolism behind all the characters. It is all futile. Instead, I suggest you read *Ramacharitamanas* as it is, feel and understand it as it is. If you apply your brain, God becomes still more elusive. Aurobindo, an intellectual giant, once said, "Reason was the helper and the reason is the barrier. Transcend reason." Your intellect has become a hurdle. Remove it from your path.

The head has nothing to do with your relationship with God. The head has no place in your connection with the guru either. Previously I was an intellectual. I have racked my brains and conducted many brainstorming sessions on the discourses of Shankaracharya, Vedanta and Adwaita, but now

I realize that Satyananda is a nobody. It was like planning to go to the moon without a farthing in my pocket. Gradually, I cut off the connection between the heart and the head. Coming to Rikhia has cured me of the intellectual quagmire.

Whether it is Ganesha, Rama, Krishna, goddess Kali or Shankarmahadev, no deity can be understood through the head. When I approached any of these through the intellect, confusion resulted, but once the heart took over and replaced the head, even a stone turned into a talking God engulfed in light. Love and bhakti, can move mountains. Love is powerful. Therefore, rely on your heart, on your bhakti, not on your brain.

For a person who wants to follow a path leading to God, there cannot be a better path than bhakti. Note down in your diary that the happiness and pleasure which you had expected, but did not receive from your wife, son, parents and wealth, will definitely come to you through bhakti. Tulsidas has said:

Is there any greater benefit than the bhakti of the Lord
Of whom the Vedas, saints and Puranas sing?
Is there any adversity in this world
Equal to not singing praises of Rama,
After getting the body of a human being?



5

Relationships with God

I do not deal with yoga any more; I have forgotten it. That was the last chapter of my life. The new chapter is bhakti. Now I only talk about how to do japa, how to remember God and how to love Him. Bhakti is your relationship with the Lord. Just as you have a relationship with your mother, father, wife or husband, in the same way you also have a relationship with God. What is this relationship? You have to discover this for yourself by realizing your relationship with Him. Who is He to you? Who are you to Him? What do you consider Him to be? This is bhakti. In *Ramacharitamānas* it says:

*Nānyā sprhā raghupate hr̥daye'smadīye
Satyaṁ vadāmi ca bhavānakhilāntarātmā,
Bhaktiṁ prayaccha raghupuṅgava nirbharāṁ me
Kāmādidoṣarahitaṁ kuru mānasaṁ ca.*

O Master of the Raghu family
I have no other desire in my heart,
I speak to Thee, O soul of the whole universe,
O excellent soul of the Raghu family,
Bestow on me Thy bhakti,
That I may depend on Thee alone,
And free my mind from the malady of desire.

(SK *sloka* 2.1)

Speculation won't help

You ask about what is written in the books. I speak about what I have seen and experienced. All the scholars who debated on this topic have relied only on speculation. Conjectured proofs were the basis of their speech. If there is no truth behind it, where is the need to debate? Even if I want to realize God, what difference does such talk make? The way to know God is through worship, veneration and meditation. You ask, "What is God? Who is he?" There is so much speculation going on about it, but it has no worth for an aspirant.

In the scriptures, God is described as formless, without beginning or end. It is said that we are all parts of Him, created by Him in His image. But there is always some controversy about whether He is within us or not; whether we are His finite or infinite part. Whether we are His children or whether nature has created us and God has nothing to do with it. Reading all these ideas, my hair turned grey. In the end I realized only one thing, and that too I have read in *Ramacharitamanas*.

Whatever amount of yoga you do, shastras you read, oblations you offer, austerities you perform, whatever you may do, God cannot be realized through that. The basis of God realization is love and devotion, just as you love your wife, you love your child or you love your property. You think about your enemy and you wish for revenge at such depth that his impression stays with the mind always; you never lose track of him. If a loved one falls sick in the house, you go on thinking about that person even while you are eating or travelling. If you have the same sentiments for God, even God appears in any form, because He is formless. Tulsidas has described this point in *Ramacharitamanas*:

do – *Kāmihi nāri piāri jimi lobhihi priya jimi dāma,*
Timi raghunātha nirantara lāgahu mohi rāma.

As a woman is dear to a lustful man
And as wealth is dear to a greedy person,

Let Rama, the stalwart of Raghukula,
Be forever dear to me.

(UK *do* 130 *kha*)

I do not know any of his forms. Some have said that God appears in the form of Rama, some said Shiva, some said Hanuman and some said Kali. Everyone visualized in the person of the Lord the reflection of his own emotional disposition.

All spoke of form, whether one form or another. How do I know whether these forms are correct or incorrect? It is only a speculation. This is what I have understood after reading *Ramacharitamānas*. If you want to know God, leave everything, sing His praises, stop all sadhanas and develop a relationship of love with God. You can develop the relationship to God as father, and love Him as you would love a father. You can relate to God as your son, and love Him as Kaushalya loved Rama. You can relate to God as your beloved, and love Him as Radha loved Sri Krishna. You can even relate to God as your enemy and hate Him as Ravana hated Rama. Day and night he could think of nothing but Rama.

*Bhāyaṁ kubhāyaṁ anakha ālasahūṁ
Nāma japata maṅgala diśi dasahūṁ,*

Whether one repeats the name
In love or humility,
In anger or apathy,
It brings auspiciousness from all directions.

(BK after *do* 27)

Experience only

When I read in *Ramacharitamānas*, about Rama's utterances to Sita or his feelings in the absence of Sita, it impresses my feelings, my emotions, and I continue to identify with what is happening there. While reading about the life of Rama,

we should become one with it, because God has no definite form. Every form is His form, every name is His name and every place is His place. Of course, we can go to pilgrimage places such as Badrinath or Haridwar; to temples, holy places, sacred places, but God is here!

While speaking about God, I do not know whether to say ‘He’, ‘She’ or ‘It’, because God does not belong to any of these categories. God is an experience, a profound experience, which gives a blow to the mind, like an earthquake. You have to prepare for it gradually, as it takes time. Without His choice, without His wish, you cannot have this experience. Maya comes to you, because she wants you. Bhakti will not come to you unless God wants you. Whenever the awakening of bhakti takes place in you, it is the choice of the Lord.

*Dharma teṁ birati joga teṁ gyānā
Gyāna mocchaprada beda bakhānā,
Jāteṁ begi dravauṁ main bhāi
So mama bhagati bhagata sukhadāi.*

*So sutantra avalamba na ānā
Tehi ādhīna gyāna bigyānā,
Bhagati tāta anupama sukhamulā
Milai jo santa hoiṁ anukulā.*

(ARK after *do* 15)

*Aba mohi bhā bharosa hanumantā
Binu hari kṛpā milahiṁ nahim santā,*

Dharma begets non-attachment
And yoga begets true knowledge.
The Vedas have declared
True knowledge is the giver of liberation.
But that which pleases me at once is bhakti,
Which gives pleasure to the devotees.
Bhakti is totally independent and without props.
True and Divine knowledge comes
Under the dominion of bhakti.

O friend, bhakti is incomparable
And is the root of all pleasures.
It is gained by the blessings of a saint.
O, Hanuman, now I am fully assured
That a saint is not available
Without the grace of God.

(SK after *do* 6)

No amount of sadhana will help you in this matter. Sadhanas are necessary for the body, mind and emotions – for physical, emotional and mental balance, but no path reaches Him! When you go from here to Bombay by train, what do you do? You sleep, you take tea and snacks, but by taking snacks, you do not reach Bombay. All these sadhanas are *bahiranga* sadhanas, external sadhanas, which we have to do because we belong to the domain of the world. We have a body, a mind, a nervous system, so we have to practise asana and pranayama. Becoming one with the totality, however, is something different. After placing your suitcase on the train, you forget about who will carry it, because the train is carrying it.

There is a story about a villager who was travelling by train. He wanted to reach his destination very quickly. So he started running through the train. He said, “If the train is going sixty miles per hour and I am running twenty miles per hour, that makes eighty miles per hour.” To run like that through the train is foolishness. To carry the load in the train, thinking, “It is my load, so I must carry it. How can the train carry it for me?” That is also foolishness.

It has also been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Nīti nīpuna soi parama sayānā
Śruti siddhānta nīka tehiṃ jānā,
Soi kabī kobida soi ranadhīrā
Jo chala chārī bhajai raghubīrā.*

He is well versed in virtue and most wise,
He knows well the principles of the Vedas,

He is learned and steady in battle –
That one, who remembers Rama,
Abandoning all deception.

(UK after *do* 126)

This means you have to feel the presence of God in different ways: the beauty of flowers, the melody of music, birds flying through the sky, deep, dense, dark forests with wild animals chasing each other. When you think about these beautiful images, you feel the presence of God. In this way, you should delve into every aspect of your experience, and you will find God as a substantial and concrete reality.

God comes in different forms, and you have heard many stories about this. Sometimes you may have doubts, but you should never doubt that God gives darshan and can speak to you. Of course, I have heard Him speak, but I do not know how to reach Him. He reaches me whenever He wants to. If I want to ask Him something, I do not know his fax or phone number. So I have no way to contact Him, but whenever He wants to, He has contacted me.

No need to fear

You do not have to worry about what God will do. Even if you steal in front of God, nothing will happen to you. Once Mulshanker, who later on became Swami Dayananda, was observing a fast on Sivaratri. As he lay awake during the night, he observed a rat nibbling at the image of Lord Shiva. He wondered why the Lord was not scaring the rat away. As a result of this incident, Swami Dayananda started preaching the philosophy of *nirakara Brahma*, or formless God. Once one of my good Aryasamaji friends asked me why the Lord was not scaring the rat away. I told him that it was not the department concerning God. Even if someone shits on God, He is not going to react, for that person is like a son to Him. If your son spits in your face, you will still love him. If your child comes home covered with dust and dirt and straightaway sits in your lap, spoiling your nice

Banarasi saree, what do you do? In *Ramacharitamanas* it has also been said:

When Rama came to Dasharatha,
Covered in dust and dirt,
The king smiled and lifted him up into his lap.

There is an altogether different relationship with God. With Him the relationship is not that of policeman. God is not a policeman, magistrate or judge. God is a benign mother or father. You should understand this point.

Therefore, from today onwards, do not worship God out of fear. You should gradually overcome the habit of asking favours from Him, for God knows what is in your mind and He will fulfil it. That is why it is said that a fully devoted bhakta is very dear to Him. A lover of God, who can love for the sake of love, who can practise bhakti for the sake of bhakti, is the best of all. I know it is not possible for everyone to do so, but there is one thing you need to know: do not be scared of God, be scared of your karmas.

Devotion in any form

Caste distinctions are the creation of society, not of God. Caste does not make anyone great or small. Great people have been born to all religions, castes and strata of society. They have been born in both poor and rich homes.

Lord Rama was born into a royal family, but Valmiki was a dacoit. He even robbed sadhus! Once he accosted a sadhu and asked him to hand over his belongings. It is very difficult to overpower a sadhu. We have an all-encompassing life experience. The sadhu managed to overcome Valmiki. Valmiki asked him for a mantra. The sadhu thought that if he gave the mantra *Rama* to Valmiki he would scoff at it or think that he was proselytizing, so he asked Valmiki to repeat *Mara*, meaning death. Repetition of Mara was actually repeating the name of Rama backwards, and by this practice Valmiki became one with Brahman.

Ulaṭā nāmu japata jagu jānā
Bālamīki bhae brahma samānā,

By repeating His name in reverse,
Valmiki became like Brahma.
The whole world is a witness to it.

(AYK before *do* 194)

We find many such stories about our rishis and munis.
Vasishtha himself was from a family of potters. In *Rama-charitamanas*, Lord Rama says to Shabari:

Kaha raghupati sunu bhāmini bātā
Mānauñ eka bhagati kara nātā,
Jāti pāñti kula dharma barāi
Dhana bala parijana guna caturāi.

Bhagati hīna nara sohai kaisā
Binu jala bārīda dekhia jaisā,

O great lady, listen to me
I do not recognize any other relationship
Except that of devotion.
Despite caste, kinship, lineage, dharma,
Reputation, wealth, power,
Family, virtue and ability,
A man devoid of bhakti
Is as worthless as a cloud without water.

(ARK after *do* 34)

Many ways to relate

In *bhakti* or devotion to God, the first and foremost step is to find your relationship with God. Simply saying, *Rama Rama* will not do the trick. When you approach a girl, you must first establish a relationship with her and then you can go to her. You first find out whether she is your mother, sister or wife, and then act accordingly. Similarly, there is a specific relationship with God. Find out what it is. Simply repeating,

“You are my mother, father, friend and companion,” is not much use. Are there no other relationships apart from mother, father, friend and companion? There are many other relationships in the world. One can be a servant of God like Hanuman. One can be an idiot, a good for nothing, an utterly useless person, a sinner. One can be a mundane person who goes after sensory pleasures, like a pig goes after faeces. All these are also relationships with God. For every person there is one specific relationship with God.

I realized after coming to Rikhia that I am a servant of God. Before that I used to think I was a *bhakta*, a devotee of God. Before that I used to think that I was a *jigyasu sadhaka*. Before that I used to think that I was a *moksha sadhaka*. Before that I used to think I had many other relationships with God. But everything changed after coming here. I found out how wrong I had been all along. None of these relationships was as good as that of a servant of God; this is really the best relationship. You can just sit peacefully. When the master says, “Satyananda, get some milk from the market,” you say, “Immediately, Master,” and rush off. There is no need to bother your head any more with the things of the world.

In devotion to God, there is no need to struggle against the tide. If God tells you to do japa, you do it. If God tells you to do dhyana, you do it. It doesn't matter whether you want to do that or not. If He tells me to go to the cremation ground, I will. If He tells me to eat muck, I will. This is the relationship of a servant. There is also the relationship of a beloved with God, *madhurya bhava*, and there is the relationship of childlike affection for God, *sneha bhava*. There are many such relationships.

Ravana had the relationship of an adversary with God, *veera bhava*. If you have the guts, you may do that too. Beat the Lord with a stick every day. From early morning throw at Him all the abusive words that exist in your dictionary. Ravana had the guts. You don't have the guts. You aren't able to sit down early in the morning and shout, “Rascal, thief,

hooligan,” and much more at Him. Veera bhava is beyond your capacity; it is the highest form of bhakti. Ravana attained salvation in merely nine days through it. After Ravana’s death, his wife Mandodari said:

do – *Ahaha nātha raghunātha sama kṛpāsindhu nahim āna,
Jogi br̥nda durlabha gati tohi dīnhi bhagavāna.*

There is no ocean of compassion
Like the master of Raghukul,
Who gave my husband such a state,
Which is difficult to attain even by yogis.

(LK do 104)

Many people sing the praises of the Lord again and again, but even at the end of life, there is nothing at hand. Veera bhava is superior to the devotion which Radha had for Sri Krishna. Radha’s bhakti was spontaneous; she did not have to strive for it. Bhakti manifested in all its glory in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mirabai and other saints. First find your relationship with God. Once you discover that relationship, your spiritual life will progress by itself. The best path is bhakti, in fact, it is the only path. Therefore, it has been said in *Narada Bhakti Sutras*:

Bhakti is much easier to attain
Than any other form of spiritual practice.

It has also been said there:

The nature of love is as indescribable
As taste is by a person who is dumb.

Bhakti means pure, true love. What the world calls love is not true love. Love for your children, your mother, your brother, your wife is not true love; it is attachment, *asakti*. There may be an element of love there, a minute amount, but it is not true love. There is no true love in this world. Bhakti is true love and it is not associated with the body, mind or soul; it is

related with *bhavana*, feeling. When you hate someone, you think about him day and night. When someone dear to you dies, you remember him all the time. The memory haunts you and you cannot forget it even if you want to. That feeling is *bhavana* which is the chief ingredient, the basic cause of love.

The generation of the twenty-first century will belong to the *bhakti yoga* culture, because humankind has developed its feelings and emotions to quite an extent during the present era. People's feelings are no longer suppressed or blocked, they are out. They may be a little perverted, but they are expressed. Now these expressed feelings have to be redirected and streamlined. The feelings that you have towards your enemy are *veera bhava*, towards a woman, *kama bhava*, towards wealth, *lobha bhava* and towards God, *bhakti bhava*.

Bhakti bhava is not of a different stuff. The stuff of *bhakti* is the same as that of hatred. When you hate a person you are obsessed by thoughts of him twenty-four hours a day, while eating, sleeping, sitting and standing. You cannot rid your mind of the thought of him. Similarly, in *bhakti bhava* you should be immersed all the time in thinking about Him. However, although it is easily attainable, this does not usually happen.

Therefore, *veera bhava* is said to be more powerful than *bhakti bhava*. That is why Ravana resorted to it. He thought that the *bhakti* of Shabari, Hanuman or Sugriva was not possible for him, so the best way would be to adopt *veera bhava*. He decided to create enmity with the Lord by abducting Sita, thinking that the Lord would, therefore, kill him and he would attain liberation. It was easy for Ravana to practise *veera bhakti*, but it is not so simple for everyone. It has been said in *Srimad Bhagavata*:

Search for a relationship with the Lord,
Be it of desire, anger or fear,
Or of love, oneness or friendship.
If such a connection is made daily
Absorption in the Lord is bound to occur.

There are two difficult types of bhakti in this world. One is veera bhakti, and the other is madhurya bhakti, Radha-Krishna bhava, the feeling which Mirabai had for Lord Krishna – “My husband is the one who adorns his head with peacock feathers.” She had married for the sake of society, but she always considered the Lord as her husband. The same is the case with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Madhurya bhava is attainable by very few people only. Similarly, veera bhava is also rare and attained by very few, but dasya bhava is attainable by one and all. *Dasya bhava* means He is my master and I am His servant. Let Him tell me what to do, I will do it. I am in His hands, I am under His command. It is the easiest of all and everyone can practise it. Tulsidas has said:

*Asa abhimāna jāi jani bhore
Mairi sevaka raghupati pati more,*

I should not forget that glorious feeling,
That I am the servant and Rama is my master.

(ARK after *do* 10)

Beyond the body

Certain relationships exist between man and God. You can relate to God as your father, mother, brother, friend, husband, master or parameshwara. God can also be your own soul or spirit. That is all. Within this range you have to search for your relationship with God. Never consider God as your in-law, nephew or uncle. You cannot have a superficial or legal relationship with God beyond the ones enumerated here. You can say:

*Tvameva maataa cha pitaa tvameva
Tvameva bandhushcha sakhaa tvameva
Tvameva vidyaa dravinam tvameva
Tvameva sarvam mama deva deva.*

“You are my mother, father, brother, friend, light and master.” Your relationship with God can exist within this

range. Sri Rama asked Hanuman, “Who am I to you?” Hanuman replied, “Oh Lord, as long as I am bound by body consciousness, as long as I identify with my body, I am your slave and servant.” All of us have this *dehatma buddhi*, our minds are conditioned by our bodies. We are tied down to our body in our consciousness; the focus of our thought is our body.

Therefore, as long as he was body-bound, Hanuman called himself the servant or attendant of Sri Rama. Then he said to Sri Rama, “When my buddhi, my intelligence, rises above the material world and I can think spiritually, then I would become a part, a fraction of you. When I am able to transcend even that stage and realize my spiritual self, when I identify with the soul and elevate my consciousness to the spiritual plane, then you and I are one and the same.”

*Dehabuddhyaa tu daasoaham
Jeevabuddhyaa tavaanshakah
Aatmabuddhyaa tvamevaahamiti me nishchitaamatih*

From the point of view of physical existence,
I am your slave.
From the point of view of the individual soul,
I am a fraction of your own Self.
From the point of view of spiritual existence,
I am You.

Unless we discover our relationship God, whatever we do is going to be futile. Of course, we can worship God, read books, perform pooja, go to the temple and church. That is all very good, but the most important thing for every one of us is to discover our existing relationship with God, because we are related to Him.

I have a very simple and straightforward relationship with Sri Rama. He is my master. He is the boss and I am his servant. This relationship is already determined between us. Therefore, Sita becomes my lady boss. She is the mistress, so I do not call her my mother or sister, and I do not consider

her a devi. She will order me around, she will command me, “Satyananda, go clean this glass quickly. Your master has come. Bring him milk.” I will respond, “Yes, madam,” to her command. This has been my servile and obedient attitude in doing everything in their name. I am neither her father nor her mother, nor am I a fraction of their essence.

I am yet to rise above *jiva buddhi*, the individual mind. *Atma buddhi*, supreme knowledge, has not yet arisen. When it arises I will say so, but not now. At present I am still at the physical level.

Serving the poor

If you write to God, c/o Everywhere, we will deliver your letter to Him. Worship and devotion to God are performed in a variety of ways. We teach asana, pranayama and kundalini yoga to the rich, those who are affluent and have a lot of leisure. We teach them many things, but does this mean that God does not live among the poor, the hungry, the sick and the distressed? Have you ever thought about this? Have you ever felt that God lives in the poor? God lives in the church and the temple as well, but have you ever thought that God also lives in a poor man who is suffering, and that when you see that man and deny his need, you are denying the God within him?

It is like having a cheap aluminium ring worth a few annas studded with diamonds worth fifty thousand rupees. Someone shows you the ring and you see the aluminium, but completely ignore the diamonds. This is what happens when you see a tree as a tree, a man as a man, an animal as an animal, a stone as a stone, a dog as a dog, an ass as an ass, a prostitute as a prostitute, a sadhu as a sadhu. You are captivated by the physical form, the visible exterior, the tangible cage. Therefore, you only see the aluminium and miss out on the diamond within. *Siya-Ramamaya sab jaga jani* – “The whole world is permeated with the inseparable pair, Sita and Rama.”

Oh, how many examples I could quote! I could go on for hours on end. There is not a single scripture which says

that God is confined to a particular place. Nor is there a single religion that chains God to one particular location. All religions unanimously teach that the best way to worship God is by serving the poor, the hapless and the needy. Even the rich are unhappy, suffering and in need of service. So, we teach them asana and pranayama and draw their attention to the God hidden within. But have you thought about the God who inhabits the hungry, the starving and the sick?

Love is love

My vritti is that of a sevak. I have *sevak vritti*. I will sit where You want me to sit. I will eat whatever You give me. You sent me to Munger, I went. You told me to leave Munger, I left. You told me to stay in Rikhia. If you tell me tomorrow to leave Rikhia, I will go. I will not think, "Where and how will an old man like me go?" A servant has no choice. The sadhana that I am doing and the life that I am leading is not of my choice. I was comfortably established in Munger. I did what He ordered and will do so in the future, according to His wish. Therefore, a servant has no choice.

Three years ago, when I had completed my purashcharana of one hundred and eight lakh (108,000,000) mantras, I received an instruction, an order "Love your neighbours as I love you. Provide them with the same facilities that I have provided for you." That is all. I have a very small kutir. That is the facility my God has provided me with. I will provide others with the same facility, because He has ordered it.

This is what is happening. Prasad Kutir is becoming full. Next month about ten thousand villagers will receive blankets; schoolboys will receive bicycles; cricket teams will receive cricket bats and balls; little children will receive balls and games, and young girls going to their husband's house will receive ornaments, sindoor, mangalsutra, beautiful Bangalore sarees, chappals, brassieres and everything they will need there. Why not? I will provide them with the same

facilities which God has provided for me. I will love them as God has loved me, because he has helped me. Love does not mean anything else.

Love is awareness. I do not have to touch anybody's feet. I do not have to kiss anybody. I do not have to put my hand on anyone's head. Love is love. It is a feeling in me. Love is never physical. Kama is physical, krodha is physical. Love is a feeling; it is kindness. I am not doing all this because it is my nature. I am doing it because He has told me to. When my Master says to me, "Listen boy, I have given you a room, why don't you provide the same for others?" My reply is, "Right Master, it will be done."

He is my master and I am His servant. This is the feeling between me and my master. I have discovered this relationship. It is not the relationship between Radha and Krishna, between Uddhava and Krishna, between Kaushalya and Rama or Yashoda and Krishna. It is the relationship between a swami and a sevak. My relationship with God is the same as the relationship between Rama and Hanuman, although I do not claim to have the qualities of Hanuman. He was truly great, but my status is that of Hanuman, neither friend nor master.

When Rama asked Hanuman, "What is the relationship between us?" Hanuman replied:

On the physical level, I am Your servant.

On the mental level, I am part of You.

On the spiritual level, You and I are one.

As long as I have deha buddhi, body consciousness, I prefer to remain His servant. As long as I am aware of my physical existence, my relationship with God is one in which I am the servant and You are my master. Tell me what to do. If You order me, I will set the world on fire. I will make it rain nectar, fire or hail all over the world. Your wish will be done. If You say, "No, my dear servant, now you are old, and it is time for you to retire on a pension of fifteen rupees per month," I will be happy and peaceful to just sit.

The mind becomes tranquil when you have no ego. What is ego? I want to do this, I want to do that; that is ego, but when I am a servant and You are the Master, and You tell me what I have to do, then there is no question of ego. If God makes me do good, He may also make me do bad. Who knows what is in His head. I have given up thinking about who God is. For sixty or seventy long years, I was always thinking about what God could be like. Was He like knowledge or wisdom? Ultimately, I stopped questioning. I have given up the quest and established a relationship with Him. Now, I love someone whom I have never seen, never met, but about whom I have been talking since my childhood.

I have given up looking for Him. I do not enquire anymore. I have decided, whoever You are, I am Your servant. In *Ramacharitamanas* it has been said:

do – *Sevaka sebya bhāva binu bhava na taria uragāri*
Bhajahu rāma pada pañkaja asa siddhānta bicāri

O enemy of serpents,
No one can cross the ocean of this world
Without the feeling of service.
So, considering it a holy law
Chant the praises of the lotus feet of Rama.

(UK do 119 ka)

Though I have not seen You, my Master, I am Your servant. I will do whatever You tell me. If You tell me to clean the toilets, I will do it. If you give me the status of Brahma, fine. “I am the chariot; You are the charioteer.” This should be the attitude of everyone.

Dharma of a servant

The toughest dharma of all, is that of a servant. There is reference in Ramayana to the time when Sri Ramachandra was in exile in the forest. His younger brother, Bharat, decided to bring Rama back to Ayodhya. He felt that by sending Rama into exile, his mother had blemished his

integrity. So he decided that to bring Rama back would be the right thing to do, and it would also exonerate him from public suspicion. He gave orders in Ayodhya to prepare for Rama's coronation and went to the forest to look for him.

When Bharat met Rama, he hesitated to tell him of his decision. He thought, 'How is it possible for me to ask him to return to Ayodhya? He is my master. This would be tantamount to ordering him. How can one order God Himself to do this or that? It is up to Him whether He wants to come to Ayodhya or remain in the forest. How can a servant order the master to act according to his dictates?' Bharat was in a deep dilemma, regarding what to say to Rama.

Eventually he said, "If you permit, all three of us brothers, Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughna, will go into exile in your place. You please decide the course of action, because I am your servant, and a servant never has any choice. I have no preference." Rama said, "Bharat, you are extremely learned. You know dharma and ethics. You know the circumstances which brought me here, and which principle I uphold in this decision of mine. I came here to fulfil the vow of my father. Let us find a way out by which both of us can maintain our dharma."

One thing has to be kept in mind by everyone, be it God, guru or parents, always remain aware of your relationship with God. The dharma of a servant is the most difficult, but it is also the most superior. If the servant is a real servant, he controls the master. A servant is the controller of the master, but he should be the type who has no preferences or choices of his own. If he has choices of his own, he is no servant.

When a servant lives in the spirit of a servant, he controls the master. You must have seen an old loyal servant who would run the entire household and take care of the master's wife and children, who could be left alone with him. They had no preferences of their own. The bhakta of God should have the same attitude, that of a true servant. This is my relationship with God. Everyone should find his own relationship with God. What is your relationship with God?

You have to discover that. You may not discover it now, but at some point in life, you will have to. Until you discover your own relationship with God, your behaviour pattern cannot be decided.

I do japa because God had clearly told me to do continuous japa with every breath, twenty one thousand, six hundred times per day. I have accepted this as an order. He may ask you to do something else.

*Asa abhimāna jāi jani bhore
Main sevaka raghupati pati more,*

I should not be unaware of this glory,
Even for a moment,
That Lord Rama is my master,
And I am His servant.

(ARK after *do* 10)

Simpler than ritual

Forms of ritual such as offering incense are necessary. I do not doubt or challenge them, but you have asked for a simple way. That is what you have to search for; that is what you have to discover for yourself. As I tell everyone, we are all related to God. Everyone is related to God. What is that relationship? Once you realize that relationship, that is the simplest way to feel His love. If you cannot discover that relationship, every way is difficult. It can take years and years; it may take the whole life. Without discovering your relationship with God, you will not be able to reach Him.

Burning incense sticks is necessary; I do it too. Every morning and evening I burn incense sticks, light a fire, put a lot of perfume in it, do arati and other nice things, but it took me many years to be able to do this. Of course fifty years is nothing. I was not even sure that I would be able to discover the relationship in this life. It came to me suddenly. He gave me the way. He revealed the relationship. I had tried my best to discover my relationship with God. Is He my father? Is he my mother? Is he my friend? Who is he to me?

Is he my God? Is He my ishta devata? Is He my beloved? Nothing was clear.

When one says, “God is my father”, what does it mean? I do not have any emotions of the kind that a son has for his father. Or, “I am God’s beloved”; I do not know what the emotion of a beloved towards her lover is. If I had realized my particular relationship with God, then I should have been able to express the emotions corresponding to that. If I think that I am the son of God and He is my father, I should be able to express, experience or feel that love. However, it did not happen like that with me. When Lord Rama asked Lakshman not to accompany him into the forest, the latter replied,

I do not know either guru, or father, or mother.
O Lord, believe me, this is my nature.
Of all the worldly relationships,
Of love or faith of which the Vedas sing,
You and You alone are all my Lord,
O friend of the poor and dweller in every heart.

Four types of bhaktas

For all bhaktas, *bhagavat naam*, the name of God, is a medicine, whether they are jignasu, jnani, artharthi or premi. There are four types of bhaktas or devotees. Those who are inquisitive about God, who want to inquire about truth are *jignasu bhaktas*. Those who pray to God for wish fulfilment, for a son or money, are called *artharthi bhaktas*. Those who are saturated with subtle knowledge and discrimination are called *jnani bhaktas*. Some people, however, pray to God because they are in love with Him. They are the *premi bhaktas*. Shabari was one of them. It has been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Nāma jīhañ japi jāgahim jogī
Birati birañci prapañca biyogī,
Brahmasukhahi anubhavañ anūpā
Akatha anāmaya nāma na rūpā.*

*Jānā cahahiṁ gūṛha gati jeū
Nāma jīhañ japi jānahiṁ teū,
Sādhaka nāma japahiṁ laya lāeñ
Hohiṁ siddha animādika pāeñ.*

*Japahiṁ nāmu jana ārata bhārī
Miṭahiṁ kusaṅkaṭa hohiṁ sukhārī,
Rāma bhagata jaga cāri prakārā
Sukṛtī cāriu anagha udārā.*

The yogi keeps awake by repeating His name,
So do those who are detached from creation.
They experience that Brahman joyfully,
Who is indescribable, without imperfection,
Having no name or form.
Those who want to know His hidden movements,
Perceive them by repeating His name with the tongue.
Spiritual practitioners repeat the name,
Becoming totally absorbed in it,
They become adepts and obtain siddhis.
When people repeat the name
Even extreme types of adversities and misfortunes
Are uprooted and they become happy.
The devotees of Rama are of four kinds,
And all four are virtuous, sinless and benevolent.

(BK after *do* 21)



6

Satsang, Faith and Surrender

Good company

Satsang means good company. You can achieve good company, first of all, by unity and communion with God. That is the first definition of *satsang*, communion with God. When you want communion, do you try to limit God within the framework of a concept? No. Religion and philosophy may talk about God in different ways, but the God which Christians, Hindus, Jews and everyone else worship is one. There are not two gods, three gods, four gods or five gods. His is only one and to commune with that God you commune through the whole of creation, the whole universe. You should not confine your awareness of God to a particular sect. God brings a total transformation in your mind and heart.

The second definition of satsang is to keep company with good literature: the Vedas, Upanishads, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Bible, Koran, Torah and many other scriptures. Then there is the literature of Sri Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda and others. There are hundreds and thousands of such books. You should make it a point to dive deep into such literature. Then the third definition of satsang is keeping company with saints, sages, mahatmas and wise men who do not have any obligation to a sect, but are universal in nature and philosophy.

It is not necessary to be a good person in order to have satsang. You may be a wretched person, an incarnation or a symbol of evil, it doesn't matter. Through satsang a transformation definitely takes place. The importance of satsang is that even the most unholy, most untouchable being becomes worthy of respect, worship and honour.

Effects of satsang

The most important influence on karma is through associations, good or bad company. While emphasizing this point in *Ramacharitamānas*, Tulsidas says:

*So jānaba satasaṅga prabhāū
Lokahuñ beda na āna upāū,
Binu satasaṅga bibeka na hoī
Rāma kṛpā binu sulabha na soī.*

*Satasaṅgata muda maṅgala mūlā
Soi phala sidhi saba sādhana phūlā,
Saṭha sudharahiṁ satasaṅgati pāī
Pārāsa parāsa kudhāta suhāī.*

These are the effects of satsang.
No other way is available
In the world or in the Vedas.
Without satsang, discrimination cannot be obtained.
That too is not possible
Without the grace of Rama.
Satsang is the root of blissful wellbeing.
That is the perfection of all fruits,
The flower of all means.
Even wicked people are reformed by satsang
In the same way that iron is transformed into gold
By the philosopher's stone.

(BK after *do* 2)

Satsang is the origin of bliss. A ruffian or a tyrant can improve with the company of the wise. A wicked man can

also improve with satsang. Suppose someone had a bad previous birth, or his parents did not give him the right training. Through contact with good company he can improve. Through bad associations children of good families can be spoiled. The company that you keep depends on the environment. You go to school or college, read books, watch films, sing songs – all these are associations. Anything that you interact with in your life is a form of association. Rishi Muni has said, “Just as a drop of water shines on a lotus leaf, thus is the glory of positive associations.”

You can see the second virtue of good company for yourself. What is a conch? It is an animal bone, but since it is in God’s hand, even brahmins raise it to their lips. Tell me, would you touch a piece of animal bone to your lips? It is said that the conch stayed in the hands of Narayan for a long time and the result was that we have to bow our heads to that piece of bone. By the power of positive association, Ravana also became the devotee of Rama at the time of his death. So Tulsidas says:

do – *Tāta svarga apabarga sukha dharia tulā eka aṅga,*
Tūla na tāhi sakala mili jo sukha lava satasaṅga.

If all the happiness of the heavens and ultimate bliss
Are placed on one side of the balance,
Then taken together they cannot measure
The happiness obtained from one iota of satsang.

(SK do 4)

You can’t create bhakti. You have to be in touch through satsang all the time. Without satsang bhakti is not possible. Satsang means ‘being in the company of saints’. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Kakabhushundi says to Garuda:

Moreṇi mana prabhu asa bisvāsā
Rāma te adhika rāma kara dāsā,
Rāma sindhu ghana sajjana dhīrā
Candana taru hari santa samīrā.

Saba kara phala hari bhagati suhāī
So binu santa na kāhūrī pāī,
Asa bicāri joi kara sataśaṅgā
Rāma bhagati tehi sulabha bihaṅgā.

do – *Brahma payonidhi mandara gyāna santa sura āhim,*
Kathā sudhā mathi kārhaḥim bhagati madhuratā jāhim.
Birati carma asi gyāna mada lobha moha ripu māri,
Jaya pāia so hari bhagati dekhu khagesa bicāri.

O my Lord, I firmly believe
That the servant of Rama is superior to Rama.
Rama is the ocean
And pious persons with firm minds are clouds.
Hari is the sandal tree
And the saints are the winds.
The result of man's performances
Is divine love which is unobtainable
Without the help of saints.
Having this thought in mind,
Whoever engages himself in satsang,
O great bird, easily attains devotion to Rama.
Brahma is the ocean of milk.
The saints are like the gods,
Who churn it with the Mandara mountain of knowledge,
And extract the butter
In the form of Rama's epic,
Which is full of the sweetness of devotion.
O King of birds, think over it.
One who has the shield of non-attachment
And sword of knowledge
Attains the victory of devotion to Hari,
After killing the enemies of ego, greed and delusion.

(UK before *do* 120)

Faith and trust are not worldly virtues; they are spiritual qualities. You should aim to develop these qualities by good satsang, not the satsang where politics and caste come in.

Satsang means association with the truth, from the roots *sat* and *sanga*. The truth here is God. While highlighting the importance of satsang, Tulsidas says in *Ramacharitamanas*:

do – *Binu satasaṅga na hari kathā tehi binu moha na bhāga,*
Moha gaeñ binu rāma pada hoi na dṛṛha anurāga.

Without satsang, no story of Rama is possible,
And without that, there is no destruction of delusion.
Without the destruction of delusion
No strong devotion at the feet of Rama is possible.

(UK *do* 61)

If you cannot organize satsang, at least read good books like *Ramacharitamanas*, *Srimad Bhagavata* and *Guru Granth Sahib*. It has been said in *Srimad Bhagavata*:

True and real knowledge
Are attainable in the human body only.
So, having attained this body,
Wise persons should remember Me,
After abandoning attachment to these gunas.

Ramacharitamanas is the most powerful tonic for generating bhakti. One should read it regularly to please the Lord and to please himself. Tulsidas has said:

Ati hari kṛpā jāhi para hoī
Pāuññ dei ehin mārāga soī,
Mana kāmanā siddhi nara pāvā
Je yaha kathā kapaṭa taji gāvā.

Only those persons can tread this path,
Who are specially graced by Hari.
Those who sing this story without deceit,
Attain success in their desired aim.

(UK *after do* 128)

Bad company

You have to be very careful about the company and associations you keep, the people with whom you live, because they influence you. Satsang is the company of good people. *Kusang* is the company of evil people. If you associate with evil people, your mind, your family, your prosperity and ultimately your whole country will be destroyed. History bears evidence of such events where people cared more for evil or negative suggestions.

In your personal life, you should reflect whether the people you are dealing with are of a positive nature. Are they people with divine, serene minds or are they malicious and evil? The choice is entirely yours and on that choice depends your destiny. Destiny and karma are both the same. Destiny is created by karma and karma is created by satsang and kusang, good associations and bad. To illustrate this there is a beautiful episode, and a very important one, in which Rama, who had been chosen for coronation as emperor, was instead exiled by his father.

It had been decided that Rama, the heir apparent, would ascend the throne of Ayodhya to become the emperor of the subcontinent of South Asia. Then the order came for his exile for fourteen years. This young man of eighteen was the darling of his father and was also loved by the king's beautiful third queen. She loved Rama very much but because of the bad company she kept, her mind changed. Queen Kaikeyi became the villain of this game, although she was such a good-natured lady. The *Ramayana* says that she loved Rama more than his mother Kaushalya did. Why did she change overnight? Not because she was bad, but because she kept bad company.

Therefore, you should live carefully. It is not enough to be good; it is also necessary that your company be good. If you take a kilo of milk and put just one drop of lemon into it, what happens? Just one drop of lemon destroys all the milk. Similarly, an evil companion, an evil suggestion, will destroy your whole life, your family, everything. The effect of

good company is just the reverse. Even if you are hopeless, bad and evil, if you move with good company, everybody will respect you.

FAITH

Man's biggest strength is not intellect; it is faith and trust. If faith and trust become solid and stable, then they switch on God's power. A lot of people are intellectual. They ask question after question: Why is that? Why is this? They follow mathematical knowledge, which does not help here. Faith and trust are not only the basis of a bhakta's life, but they form the very foundation of human life. How do you know that such and such a person is your father? What proof is there? Have you ever questioned the fact that such and such a person is your father? Wherever there is faith and trust there can be no question. I accept something in faith, full stop. There can be no further question. Just a drop of lime will curdle milk. The quantity of milk is irrelevant. Just a drop will suffice.

*Kavaniu siddhi ki binu bisvāsā
Binu hari bhajana na bhava bhaya nāsā.*

do – *Binu bisvāsa bhagati nahiṁ tehi binu dravahiṁ na rāmu
Rāma kṛpā binu sapanehuṁ jīva na laha biśrāmu*

No siddhi can be obtained
Without faith.
Without remembering Hari,
There is no hope of dissolving
The fear of this world.
Without faith, there is no devotion,
And without devotion,
Rama does not bestow His mercy.
Without the grace of Rama,
The jiva has no rest, even in dream.

(UK before *do* 90)

This path of faith and trust is the best path for a spiritual aspirant. It is good to study and do satsang, but no matter how much you do these things, you will not receive any grace, until your faith and trust become stable and powerful. Faith and trust awaken in places like this. It does not matter what clothes you wear, what food you eat, or how you live. Nothing matters as long as you have faith and trust. However, if you do not have faith, then do not come to the spiritual path. Then you can study intellectual books in English and Hindi. You may understand everything, but you will not experience anything, unless you have faith and trust.

A subject of faith

You will not reach God if you change your path or caste. You have to change yourself to reach God, whatever your religion or caste may be. You have to change your faith and your belief, because God is a subject of faith and belief. Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:20):

Those devotees who follow the immortal dharma,
endowed with faith, regarding Me as their supreme goal,
are exceedingly dear to Me.

God is not a subject of red cloth and beard. He is not a subject of Mulla Nasaruddin, Mulla Kamruddin, Pandit Ramchandra. God is a subject only of faith and belief. It does not make any difference whether you are Hindu, Muslim or Christian. Whatever you may be, if you are true, your devotion will take you to God. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Rama says to Shabari that he acknowledges the relationship of bhakti and bhakti alone.

Do you know the story of Raidas? A friend of his was going to Varanasi, so he asked Raidas if he would accompany him. Raidas answered, “No, I cannot come. I am a cobbler, and I am very poor.” Instead, he gave his friend some pieces of *haldi*, turmeric, to offer to Ganga. His friend went to Varanasi and he had his bath in the Ganga, but forgetting to

offer the turmeric which Raidas had given to him, he started off on his return journey. All of a sudden he heard a voice behind him, “Haldi, haldi.” When he turned around, he saw two hands rising from the Ganga. It was a miracle; Gangaji was asking for the turmeric from Raidas.

Such faith and belief are the greatest human qualities. It has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

Devotion to Lord Rama
Is a life-restoring medicine,
And intense faith its vehicle.

Intellect does not make man unique. Man is great because he has faith and belief, not because of his intellect. You have faith and belief, therefore, you are superior human beings. If you are without faith and belief, and possess only reasoning and calculation, then you are merely a sound box, fit for nothing. Faith is power and it can work miracles. There is no blind faith. Blind faith is a phrase coined by rascals.

Greatest qualities

Is God formless? No. All forms are forms of God. God is not formless. You can experience Him in any form. He may manifest in the form of the naughty Sri Krishna, in the form of Lord Rama, a goddess or even a prostitute. Manu and Satarupa told the Lord that they wanted a son like Him:

Jewel amongst benefactors and ocean of compassion,
O, Lord, I say truly that I want a son like you.
There is no way to hide anything before the Lord.

Then the Lord Himself said:

In the form of a human being of my choice,
I will manifest myself in your house.

It all depends upon his wish. The great saint Eknath had His darshan in the form of a donkey. In fact, the Lord does not have a definite form. Vyasadeva says:

Oh God! You do not have a definite form,
Therefore, we can worship You in any form.

In *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Shiva says to Parvati:

None know the beginning or the end of the Lord.
The Vedas have also confirmed this.
He walks without feet, hears without ears,
And performs all acts without hands.
He enjoys all tastes without a tongue,
And is a great orator without speech.
He touches and feels all things without skin,
He sees without eyes and smells without a nose.
He performs many marvels for the sake of His devotees,
And His glory cannot be described by any words.
He who is attributeless, formless, invisible and unborn,
Takes a form because of the love of His devotees.

In fact, the most important things in the path of bhakti are faith and belief. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:2), the Lord himself says:

Those who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me,
ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith, these I
consider to be perfect in yoga.

Faith and belief, or faith and trust are the basis of bhakti. They are also the basis of one's life. If somebody were to say that you have blind faith because you have accepted your father as your own father, without any proof, you would regard that person as mad. Faith and belief are the foundation of our life, family, society and also of bhakti. Even a great saint or intellectual devoid of inner trust and belief is a faithless person. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas prays to Lord Shiva and Parvati who constitute faith and belief:

I bow down to Parvati and Shiva,
Who are embodiments of faith and trust.

Without them, even the adept cannot perceive God,
Although He dwells within all alike.

(BK *sloka* 2)

A faithless person is like a beautiful woman adorned with ornaments, but completely naked. Similarly, most intellectuals are rich in ornaments, but naked otherwise. Previously I was also like them. Intellect is not the basis of life. Faith and belief are innate qualities in man. Without faith and belief, man would not survive even for a single day. Faith and belief provide an individual with an identity.

Faith and belief are the basis of man. When a girl marries she goes to a strange house. She has to adapt and make it her own home, because she has to live there for the rest of her life. While she stays there as a mistress, what is the basis of her strength and support, other than faith and belief?

In fact, one cannot survive without faith and belief; they are man's greatest qualities. If they are channelled properly towards God, life will be full of bliss and wonder, and the journey of life will be completed successfully. This is the best way. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna has declared (9:3): "Men devoid of faith in the dharma do not attain Me, O Oppressor of foes, but return to the path of the mortal world."

Other paths, such as jnana yoga, raja yoga, nada yoga, mantra yoga, kaivalya marga, and so on, are all difficult to follow. You cannot practise nirvikalpa samadhi. If sannyasins cannot succeed on this path, you will not be able to. You may concentrate the mind for a short period of time, but the concentration soon breaks. Bhakti can never break, it is a continuous process, like the Ganga which flows ceaselessly without a break. Yes, the path of bhakti is the easiest and most straightforward. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Rama says:

The path of bhakti is easy and pleasant to follow,
The Puranas and Vedas declare this to be so.
The path of jnana is difficult and full of obstacles,

Formless meditation is hard to practise,
Because it offers no base for the mind to rest.

Need for change

The essence of God is not easy to comprehend through books. Books should be read; I don't deny or discourage it, but books alone cannot lead you to the ultimate truth. The way is within you because you are the nearest person to Him and God is closest to you. He is so close to you, just turn your mind and you will see Him. About turn, not left or right turn or quick march, just about turn. A poet has said:

The Lord is in the mirror of the heart,
One can see him whenever he bends his head.

In order to turn the mind, you have to turn everything about: all concepts, behaviour, thinking, fears, psychosis, passions, affections, attachments, idiosyncrasies, silliness, rascality. We have to change everything that we are. In *Ramacharitamanas*, God Himself says:

I wash off the multitude of sins,
Collected even in the crores of birth,
As soon as a man appears before me.

However, it is difficult to change. Aspirants who take sannyasa only change their dress, nothing else changes. Change is not easy. It is easy to change your name, religion, dress or country, but you cannot change yourself. It is the hardest thing that a man can do. The one who can do it is not a man, he is a junior God.

The question arises of God and spirit. God's presence within you is His spirit. Electricity is present in the electrical wires, but it is a part not the total voltage of electricity. I'll give you an example to help you understand that spirit can be evoked, aroused, awakened and manifested through a particular method. I have tried all methods, including tantra, but ultimately I have come to the last point of my spiritual life, not the last part of my life.

I have come to the conclusion that if you have faith, you have God in you. I can also assure you that everyone of you has faith. You are not bankrupt, you are rich in faith. If I tell you that your faith is more powerful, effulgent and rich than your intellect, you will not understand. So far as intellect is concerned, you are a pigmy, but your faith is vast, cosmic, pure and great. However, you are misusing that faith and belief in your worldly life. Why are you misusing it? Because of hatred, jealousy, love, affection, attachment, lust and greed. These are misappropriations of your inherent energy, which nature has given to you in the form of faith and belief.

The easiest method I have is bhakti, devotion to God. Live the life you want, but with the awareness that He is operating through you and every action is His inspiration. Every accomplishment is God's grace and every loss, every pain is God's teaching. Death is not painful, it is not God's curse. Death is a teaching, so too are disease, separation, pain, disappointment and frustration. The rest you know: where is kundalini, where is the light and how to awaken it? Therefore, you should try to awaken your *shraddha*, your faith. In this regard it has been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Devoid of faith, bhakti is not possible,
Nor does Lord Rama give His blessings.
Without the grace of Lord Rama,
No living being can find peace, even in dream.

The jewel of faith

In *Ramacharitamanas* it is said, the servant of Rama, the servant of God, is greater than God Himself. Knowledge of God does not necessarily bring you closer or guarantee communion with Him, but faith in God does. Through knowledge alone you may or may not develop communion; it is never a certainty. Therefore, faith is the greatest asset. It is a valuable gem, like a rare diamond, pearl or ruby. The most precious and valuable jewel is faith. If you can attain this jewel, your path becomes clear. You will travel at the

highest speed, like a racing car on the superhighway with no traffic lights or crossings in your way. All the obstacles that arise on this journey will disappear and that is the highest path of bhakti.

You may say that God is my father or God is my mother, but the best relationship of all is: You are the master and I am not God although the Bible says, “My Father and I are one,” and the Upanishads say, “Aham Brahmasmi”. But if you feel that this is true, why are you unhappy? Why do you cry? Why are you in ignorance? Why are you in avidya? Why are you subject to tamas, rajas and sattwa? Finally, as far as I am concerned my position today is – I am Thy servant and I shall carry out all Thy wishes.

You will discover that bhakti brings spontaneity into your life. Even if you do not want to love God, you will love Him. Even if you do not want to surrender, you will have to. Even if you don’t want anything from Him, He will give you everything. Faith in God brings spontaneous blessings. You don’t have to ask God for anything in a church, temple or prayer hall, because you are the servant. Your duty is not to ask, your duty is to serve. All disciples should live like servants, but they live like masters. They do what they want, not what I want, so there is no spontaneity of relationship. God wants spontaneity in His relationship with us. When He gives you pain, accept it. When you are in pain you say it is due to a curse or to bad karma, because you feel that only good things are the blessings of God. Pain is a curse as well as a blessing of God.

Faith in God is a glorious, wish-fulfilling jewel.
If your heart is full of the valuable jewel of faith,
Then your mind and heart will always be radiant.
Throughout the day and night there will be no darkness.
This illumination does not depend on any lamp or candle.
Even if you are poor, it doesn’t matter.
In fact, one who has faith is never poor,
Poverty never approaches.

Remember that poverty has nothing to do with money. There are people without money who are rich. There are wealthy people who, in fact, are poor. That is real poverty. Poverty means ignorance, avidya.

Faith dispels the overpowering gloom of ignorance
like sunlight dispels the clouds.
Vanity and ignorance automatically go away with the gem
of faith.
When faith and will develop,
Illumination arises from within,
Just as the sun rises and illumines the darkness.

Christians by background know what faith means. Faith is the basis of the Christian dharma. I am teaching this not through the Bible, but through the *Ramayana*. Faith is the basis of spiritual life and the only thing you have to cultivate in life is faith.

Even propensities like lust, anger and greed
will never approach if that gem resides in your heart.
Poison is transformed into nectar
and enemies become friends.
Those who are suffering from mental afflictions
will find that their pain disappears.
He in whose heart abides the jewel of faith in God
cannot have suffering, even in dreams.
Those who strive for that jewel are the wisest of people.
Of course, this jewel is manifest in the world,
But no one can find it without the grace of God.
There are easy ways to attain it, but luckless souls
contemptuously reject it.
The scriptures are like holy mountains,
And the stories related to God in any form are like many
glorious mines.
The saints are the expert mineralogists and penetrating
intellect is their pickaxe,

While spiritual wisdom and detachment from worldly affairs are their penetrating eyes.

Any creature who searches for Him with love finds the jewel.

Faith is itself the mine of every blessing, of every benediction.

I have in my heart this conviction: the servant of God is greater than God.

God is the ocean, and the good and the steadfast are the rain clouds.

We have to be the rain clouds in order to fulfil Him.

Hari or God is the sandal tree and the saints are the winds which carry the perfume from this end to that.

Firm faith in God is the reward for all spiritual efforts.

Whatever you practise, whether asana, pranayama, kundalini yoga, raja yoga or rebirthing, the reward has to be faith. No matter what sadhana you do, ultimately, you have to come to a saint.

*Rāma bhagati cintāmani sundara
Basai garuṣa jāke ura antara,
Parama prakāsa rūpa dina rātī
Nahiṁ kachu cahia diā ghr̥ta bātī.*

*Moha daridra nikaṭa nahim āvā
Lobha bāta nahim tāhi bujhāvā,
Prabala abidyā tama miṭi jāī
Hārahim sakala salabha samudāī.*

*Khala kāmādi nikaṭa nahim jāhīm
Basai bhagati jāke ura māmīm,
Garala sudhāsama ari hita hoī
Tehi mani binu sukha pāva na koī.*

*Byāpahim mānasa roga na bhārī
Jinha ke basa saba jīva dukhārī,
Rāma bhagati mani ura basa jākem
Dukha lavalesa na sapanehuñ tākem.*

*Catura siromani tei jaga māhīm
Je mani lāgi sujatana karāhīm,
So mani jadapi pragaṭa jaga ahaī
Rāma kṛpā binu nahim kou lahaī.*

*Sugama upāya pāibe kere
Nara hatabhāgya dehim bhaṭabhere,
Pāvana parbata beda purānā
Rāma kathā rucirākara nānā.*

*Marmī sajjana sumati kudārī
Gyāna birāga nayana uragārī,
Bhāva sahita khojai jo prānī
Pāva bhagati mani saba sukha khānī.*

*Morem mana prabhu asa bisvāsā
Rāma te adhika rāma kara dāsā,
Rāma sindhu ghana sajjana dhīrā
Candana taru hari santa samīrā.*

*Saba kara phala hari bhagati suhāī
So binu santa na kāhūñ pāī,
Asa bicāri joi kara satasaṅgā
Rāma bhagati tehi sulabha bihaṅgā.*

do – *Brahma payonidhi mandara gyāna santa sura āhim
Kathā sudhā mathi kāṛhahim bhagati madhuratā jāhim
Birati carma asi gyāna mada lobha moha ripu māri
Jaya pāia so hari bhagati dekhū khagesa bicāri*

But nobody has ever acquired this jewel of faith without
the help of saints.

Whosoever bears this in mind and communes with the good
finds devotion to God an easy attainment.

It is the saints who bring this wisdom to people.

That is faith which defends itself with the shield of continence
And slays the enemies of pride, ignorance and greed
through knowledge, and wins the victory.

(UK after do 119 to do 120 *kha*)

Therefore, the ultimate of life, of all our ambitions, of all our convictions, should be faith, or shraddha.

Faith – the ultimate

Shraddha, faith, is the *brahmastra*, the ultimate weapon of spirituality. It is the ultimate armour, the ultimate power of spiritual life. In *Ramacharitamanas*, it is said:

*Bhavaanishankarau vande
Shraddhaavishvaasarupinau,
Yaabhyaamvinaa na pashyaanti siddhaah
Svaantahsthameeshwaram.*

Without shraddha and vishwas, faith and deep conviction, even great siddhas cannot achieve spiritual attainment.

(BK sloka 2)

I read *Ramacharitamanas* regularly. One day this particular portion of Balakanda caught my attention: *Bhavaanishankarau vande shraddhaavishvaasarupinau*, which means, “I bow to Bhavani and Sri Shankara, who are the symbols of faith and deep conviction.” Yes, this is correct. I read it and went on, but when I read the third and the fourth lines I was stunned: *Yaabhyaamvinaa na pashyaanti siddhaah svaantahsthameeshwaram*. It means, “Without faith and belief, even the adepts, siddhas or perfected beings cannot experience the God that is living within.” So, even siddhas have their limitations, let alone ordinary people.

SURRENDER

Thy will be done

When you cannot decide a path for yourself, you should surrender completely to God. When you are indecisive, you should not depend on your mind. At such times you have to depend on a higher reality. It is my personal experience that when you pray and ask God to give you direction, He gives

it. Of course, you have to be innocent. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:16), Lord Krishna said to Arjuna:

Renouncing all duties, take refuge in Me. I will liberate thee from all sins, grieve not.

When you are unable to decide the next step in a difficult situation, then merely depending on reason or on your mind is not sufficient. You can easily make an erroneous decision. It has been said in *Ramacharitmanas*:

*Hari sevakahi na byāpa abidyā
Prabhu prerita byāpai tehi bidyā,
Tāte nāsa na hoi dāsa kara
Bheda bhagati bāṛhai bihaṅgabara.*

Avidya can never take possession of the Lord's servant. Impelled by the Lord, vidya takes the place of avidya. The servant is never destroyed by ignorance and doubt, Along with knowledge, his devotion continues to develop.

(UK after *do* 78}

I have never had any problems in my life. If I have taken decisions, they were in compliance with His wishes. I have always followed His command, not my own. On very few occasions, probably once or twice, I have asked myself, "What shall I do"? And His reply came promptly.

In the same way, when one is in a dilemma and does not know what to do, one should leave it to God, or go to a saint who has *divya drishti*, divine vision.

Spontaneous process

Total self-surrender is known as *atmanivedan* or presenting yourself completely to God. It can also be called *atma samarpan* or self-surrender. This is the ninth and last stage of bhakti. As it says in *Ramacharitmanas*:

*Navadhā bhagati kahauñ tohi pāhīm
Sāvadhāna sunu dharu mana māhīm,*

*Prathama bhagati santanha kara saṅgā
Dūsari rati mama kathā prasaṅgā.*

do – *Gura pada paṅkaja sevā tisari bhagati amāna
Cauthi bhagati mama guna gana karai kapaṭa taji gāna*

*Mantra jāpa mama dṛṛha bisvāsā
Pañcama bhajana so beda prakāsā,
Chaṭha dama sīla birati bahu karamā
Nirata nirantara sajjana dharamā.*

*Sātavaṁṁ sama mohi maya jaga dekhā
Moteṁ santa adhika kari lekhā,
Āṭhavaṁṁ jathālābha santoṣā
Sapanehuṁṁ nahim dekhai paradoṣā.*

*Navama sarala saba sana chalahīnā
Mama bharosa hiyaṁṁ haraṣa na dīnā,
Nava mahuṁṁ ekau jinha keṁ hoī
Nāri puruṣa sacarācara koī.*

*Soi atisaya priya bhāmini moreṁ
Sakala prakāra bhagati dṛṛha toreṁ,*

Hearing, singing, remembering,
Service to His feet, worship, salutations,
Servant-like behaviour, friendliness
And surrender to Vishnu, are the nine steps to bhakti.

(ARK before and after *do* 35)

Lord Rama gave this sermon or *upadesh* to Shabari, because she asked the same question. Rama said, “If you practise navadha bhakti systematically, then you can reach a point of total self-surrender.” In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:18–19), Sri Krishna says:

He who is the same to foe and friend, and also on honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment, to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with

anything, homeless, steady minded, full of devotion – that man is dear to Me.

Before self-surrender can take place, the entire personality has to be rearranged. Self-surrender is not just the thought that you want to surrender; it is an inborn quality. For surrender, you require innocence. The heart, mind, buddhi, have become tough and rigid. In order to soften your heart, mind and intellect, satsang is necessary for a sustained period of time. Satsang is a powerful tool.

Why should you be so tense about surrender? Surrender is spontaneous. If you want to rise, you have to use energy, force and strain, but if you want to fall down, you do not have to do anything. You do not need to use strength; instead you have to lose it and just fall down. The more worried you are about surrender, the less likely you are to attain it. Surrender happens spontaneously. Don't worry about surrender, worry only about satsang, bhakti and the discovery of your relationship with God.



7

Life, Pain and Society

The purpose of human life

The purpose of human life is to find or realize God. Whatever has to come: children, family, money, wealth, will come. While going to Calcutta, whether you eat nuts or dates or take tea, is immaterial, as Calcutta will come. Eating nuts, taking tea, smoking cigarettes or bidis, reading the newspaper or sleeping, are not the goal of the journey, the goal is Calcutta. Similarly, the only goal of our life, for which we are born, is to realize God. In *Ramacharitamanas* Tulsidas says:

The aim of this body
Is to remember the Lord,
Abandoning all desires.

Whether you are born in the house of a brahmin, a shoemaker or a businessman, does not make any difference. Nor does it matter whether you are fat or thin, a noble person, a thief, a dacoit, a gambler or a drunkard. If you have realized why you were born, the goal of your life, it doesn't matter what you do. But if you are ignorant of this goal, then despite being a noble brahmin, you are worthless and your life has no purpose. You may not eat meat, chicken, onions or garlic, you may worship Tulsi and Rama, but if you are ignorant of the goal of your life and the purpose of your birth, then you have achieved nothing. In *Srimad Bhagavata*, Dattatreya says:

This human body is an open door for liberation,
Having gained this, if one remains closed
In his house like a bird locked in a cage,
He has fallen from a great height.

You think you are born to get married, to produce children, to manage the family, to work for payment or to construct a house. No, these things are not the purpose of your life. All that you are actually doing is getting ready for the path which will help you achieve your goal. Peanuts, newspapers, bidis and cigarettes are fine in their own place, so you should definitely not consider yourself bad or useless because you use them. You should also not think that unless you become a good person you cannot pursue spiritual life, or that the divine path is only open to pious people. No, that is not so at all. The divine path is open to all. Therefore, in *Ramacharitamanas* the Lord Himself has also stated:

Even if a man is the enemy of the whole world,
But comes to My refuge, although being frightened,
Abandoning pride, delusion and all deceitful acts,
I turn him into a sadhu without delay.

You are already on the path of God. You took an oath the day your existence began in your mother's womb. That is what you forget. The day you appeared in your mother's womb, you took an oath, "O God, take me out of this dark dungeon." After nine months you came out and the worldly air entered your nostrils. From that day you started saying, "I, I" and forgot to say, "you, you." This idea also disappeared from the memory of your parents, brothers, sisters, priests and teachers. Everyone expected you to go to work and earn money. Everyone thinks about many things in household life, things which I do not even know, because I have never even opened a bank account.

You can do any kind of work. I never speak in favour of doing nothing. I never say to leave your job. I never

say not to marry. I just say not to leave anything, to keep on doing what you have been doing. Live however and wherever you like. However, if you know the goal of your life, your coming here will have been successful and you many not need to come again. I do not have any interest in this world, nor do I have interest in myself. If God-realization is not the purpose of life, life has no meaning. Life itself is purposeless. I don't see any other purpose for this life. Even if I examine life scientifically, for example, the theory of evolution, I always find that the individual soul or *jivatma* is trying its level best to reach and merge with the *paramatma*.

Human body

I always pray to God, “As long as I practise sadhana, keep me fit. The day I give it up, do whatever you wish with me.” If I do not perform sadhana, if I do not live a spiritual life, it is better to get sick and die. Life has no meaning if one does not devote oneself entirely to God. Without Him, one would never have been born. Tulsidas says:

*Baṛeṁ bhāga mānuṣa tanu pāvā
Sura durlabha saba granthanhi gāvā,
Sādhana dhāma moccha kara dvārā
Pāi na jehiṁ paraloka sañvārā.*

do – So paratra dukha pāvai sira dhuni dhuni pachitāi
Kālahi karmahi īsvaraḥ mithyā doṣa lagāi

*Ehi tana kara phala biṣaya na bhāi
Svargau svalpa anta dukhadāi,
Nara tanu pāi biṣayañ mana dehīṁ
Palaṭi sudhā te saṭha biṣa lehīṁ.*

The human body is obtained by great good fortune.
Scriptures say that it is difficult
To be obtained even by gods.
Obtaining this seat of sadhana
Is a gateway to liberation.

One who does not pave the way for the next world
Laments morosely,
Wrongly attributing the blame
To time, karma and God.
The purpose of obtaining this body
Is not for sense enjoyment,
Because even heavenly enjoyments are short-lived
And ultimately full of afflictions.
Those who are interested in sense enjoyment
While having a human body
Are fools, who barter nectar in exchange for poison.

(UK before and after *do* 43)

The only need for human existence is to become a medium
for God's *leela*, or play. The one never becomes many.
Tulsidas says in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Deha dhare kara yaha phalu bhāī
Bhājia rāma saba kāma bihāī.

This is the fruit of having this body –
You should remember Rama, abandoning all desires.

(KK after *do* 22)

To give an example: the power produced by one generating station lights bulbs in so many different houses. Electricity is the same everywhere, but when it manifests in the form of a bulb, fan, refrigerator, etc., you see many instead of one. The many are in the manifestation, not in the *tattwa* or element. Even today, the supreme element or *atma* is only one. You see 'many' because of its varied manifestations.

One can realize this only when the eye of knowledge opens. The enjoyment of pleasure is transient; it lasts only for a moment. Whatever relationships I may have, my likes, dislikes, marriage, happiness, sorrow and death, they are all a dream. Who opens the eye of knowledge? The guru, but a special guru. Any guru cannot do it. Tulsidas says in *Ramacharitamanas*:

so – *Binu gura hoi ki gyāna gyāna ki hoi birāga binu*
Gāvahiṁ beda purāna sukha ki lahia hari bhagati binu

Is spiritual knowledge possible without the guru?
And is spiritual knowledge possible without detachment?
Can happiness be gained without God?
Such is declared in the Vedas and Puranas.

(UK *soratha* 89 *ka*)

The most important

The ultimate point in life is God consciousness. As is said in *Ramacharitamānas*:

Bhagati hīna guna saba sukha aise
Lavana binā bahu biñjana jaise.

(UK after *do* 83)

Basana hīna nahīn soha surārī
Saba bhūṣana bhūṣita bara nārī.

All qualities and happiness devoid of bhakti
Are like various kinds of unsalted food.
In the same way, O enemy of the gods,
A most beautiful woman adorned in jewels
Does not please the eye if she is unclothed.

(SK after *do* 22)

You may have everything: intellect, money, power, beauty, but without devotion, your life is barren; you have no stuff. Devotion to God is the ultimate sadhana. Yoga is not the ultimate sadhana; yoga prepares the road. Just as the road roller from the Public Works Department prepares smooth roads for cars to drive on, yoga prepares inroads for the mind. Devotion is not going to a temple or a church to pray. Devotion is love and romance with God. Your mind is dancing with God. He is my lover, my beloved. I am prakriti, jivatma, female, He is male; He is my husband; He is everything to me. That attitude must come. When all

the passions are transformed, you will have no passion for anything except Him.

It is said in the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* that according to sage Narada, devotion is characterized by complete dedication of all activities and observances to God, and by the experience of extreme agony while forgetting Him. There are many instances of such devotion. The Gopis of Vrindavan can be cited as examples. In the last pronouncement of the *Ramayana* it is said that:

do – *Kāmihi nāri piāri jimi lobhihi priya jimi dāma,*
Timi raghunātha nirantara lāgahu mohi rāma.

God should be as dear to me
In the same manner as a woman is dear to a man.
As money is dear to a miser,
So shall God be dear to me.

(UK do 130 *kha*)

The last goal in life is the attainment of total surrender to the Lord, and refuge in Him, nothing else. If you do not achieve this, you have to come back with a return ticket in your next birth.

Why moksha?

I do not know what *moksha*, liberation, is, but I can tell you what is written about it in the books. I do not even want moksha. I have read that there is no birth or death after moksha. Only by being born can you enjoy the fun of joy and sorrow. Unless you are born, how will you utter the name of God? By attaining moksha, how will you be able to remember God? What is your goal? Is it to attain moksha or is it to be a bhakta of God? If you want to stay with God, do not even talk about moksha. That is not your faculty. Your faculty is to live with God. Even that is not possible right now, because for that you require a ticket.

The only possibility is to live with the name of God. Just remember the name of God; that is more than enough for the moment. Tulsidas has said:

do – *Nāmu rāma ko kalapataru kali kalyāna nivāsu*
Jo sumirata bhayo bhāṅga tem tulasī tulasīdāsu

The name of Rama
Is the wish-fulfilling tree.
It is the source of blessings in Kali Yuga.
By remembering the name,
Tulsidas was transformed
From bhang into holy tulsi!

(BK do 26)

If you can remember the name of God every morning and evening with as much single mindedness as you remember your sick child, your beautiful wife, your old mother, your sister who has gone to her husband's house or a vanquished enemy, know then that you have reached the goal, that your boat has crossed the river. However, if you want moksha, you will have to go to one who gives moksha.

The idea of moksha does not appeal to me. I do not know what will happen in the future. I have read a lot about moksha. Our shastras are full of this concept. Sometimes I used to give lectures about videha mukti and jivan mukti, but as far as sadhana is concerned, just remember one thing. If you can be aware of God as you are constantly aware of the pain in a wound, it is called *surati*. If this awareness comes, you are lucky and blessed. Kabir has said:

With every breath, remember His name.
Not even one breath should pass in vain.
For no one knows whether that outgoing breath
Will ever return again.

When you are helpless, when you have nowhere to go, when your body is completely tired and broken, when your mind does not function, your soul becomes free to unite with Him. The bulb breaks and the energy returns to the power house. Similarly, in *Ramacharitamanas*, Jatayu says to Rama:

*Jā kara nāma marata mukha āvā
Adhamau mukuta hoi śruti gāvā,
So mama locana gocara āgeṁ
Rākhaun deha nātha kehi khāñgeri.*

The Vedas have sung that even the meanest is liberated,
If he utters the name of Rama at the time of death.
Today that very Rama is present before my eyes.
After seeing that, what is the use of keeping this body?

(ARK after *do* 30)

PAIN

Law of karma

There is no need to worry while performing your worldly duties, because every success has the name of the person written on it, and that person who is entitled will definitely reap that success. No one can stop it, regardless of the stature of the person. Everyone has a fixed quota of happiness and sorrow. I am not joking! This is the truth and I have experienced it. This has also been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Subha aru asubha karama anuhārī
Īsu dei phalu hṛdayaṁ bicārī,
Karaī jo karama pāva phala soī
Nigama nīti asī kaha sabu koī.*

Considering an individual's good and bad actions,
The Lord weighs the cause and sanctions the result.
The result is the outcome of the action in totality,
The scriptures, justice and everything confirm it.

(AYK before *do* 77)

I had a friend in Sambalpur, who was a forest officer. He had a son in Nairobi. One day he went to Hoshiarpur to an astrologer who had a copy of the *Bhṛigu Samhita*. The astrologer looked up the son's chart and found that it predicted his early death. My friend came to me and I

told him that everything happens, first in time and then in space. This incident had happened in time, and now all that remained was for it to happen in space. When the time arrived for this incident to happen in space, sure enough, the car in which the son was travelling with his wife overturned and both of them were killed. The father knew of this prediction beforehand and so did I, still he asked me how that incident was possible. I told him that when something has to happen, it first occurs in eternity, then in time, and then in space. Nothing happens all of a sudden.

Similarly, people receive happiness or sorrow, according to the amount written against their name, they definitely get the specified amount of both, so there is no need to worry.

Lessons to learn

My mother loves me, but if I have a physical problem, she will have me operated upon. At the time of the operation, I will cry with pain. I cannot say that my mother is cruel because of this step she has taken. Tulsidas says:

do – *Jadapi prathama dukha pāvai rovai bāla adhīra,
Byādhi nāsa hita jananī ganati na so sisu pīra.
Timi raghupati nija dāsa kara harahim māna hita lāgi,
Tulasidāsa aise prabhuhi kasa na bhajahu bhrama tyāgi.*

Although the child, while being operated upon
Feels the pain and cries helplessly,
The mother does not mind the child's agony,
Her sole aim is to relieve his disease.
In the same way the Lord removes the pride
Of His servant for the servant's own welfare.
Shaking off all suspicions and doubts
Tulsidas implores one to worship such a Lord.

(UK do 74)

What is suffering? Suffering is a blessing in disguise. We are always afraid of suffering, and we do not want to suffer. However, suffering is a means of realizing and exterminating

the evil karma. One should welcome it just as you welcome an operation when your appendix or any other organ is inflamed. There are people who do not like suffering; therefore they feel it more. There are those who enjoy suffering; thereby they are able to increase their tolerance and will.

Pain and suffering is a crucible into which Nature throws a man whenever She wants to make him a sublime superman. Do you realize how much Christ or Mahatma Gandhi had to suffer? Sri Rama spent fourteen years in exile. There were only thorns in his life; the pain of exile was only one of them. If you suffer, you should always think that God is trying to awaken you from your stupor.

Man must know sorrow; it is a learning experience for him. Sorrow makes you learn. If a loved one dies, you feel unhappy. Nobody wants sorrow, everybody wants to be happy, but in happiness one loses self control.

Prosperity, fame and power make a person weak. Therefore, when you are prosperous and powerful, you should lead a hard life. A man who is rich and powerful should not try to enjoy his riches and power.

When God gives us a lot, what is to be done with it? A man needs only some bread to eat and a small house to live in. God gives us prosperity so that we may give to others. He only makes us an agent. He gives us one million dollars and says, "Look here, you take your monthly salary and the rest you give to others." He makes us a trustee, a medium, an agent. For one who has a large heart and consciousness, the entire humanity is one family, the whole world is a family, a community. Whatever prosperity or power you enjoy, whatever compassion, love or kindness you have, share it with everyone. If you do not share, the powers that be will create trouble for you, the prosperity will become a sore; it will come into your foot and then you will not be able to walk. It has happened to many rich people and they are unhappy. They cannot sleep without tranquillizers.

It is said that you should bear your sorrows alone and share your happiness with everybody. However, in reality, the opposite happens. People want to share their unhappiness, distribute it to others, and enjoy their happiness alone in private.

Salt of life

What kind of people are we? We are unreasonable. We only want from God those things that we want. We don't want what he wants. That is why everybody is unhappy. What is the grace of God? If you go to hospital to see a surgeon, do you want him to use a rose or a knife to operate with? Tulsidas has clearly said that even though a mother loves her child, when an operation is necessary she will agree to it because it will cure the child and make him healthy. Suffering makes a man; enjoyment makes him weak. That is why all the saints suffered.

Christ suffered throughout his life. I don't think he ever slept on a foam mattress. He must have slept on the floor with a rotten blanket. I don't think he had a comb or used bath oil and shampoo. Christ could perform miracles, but why didn't he do so on the cross? He had to suffer. You can say the same about many other saints. Analyze the life of Sri Rama, whom you call the incarnation of God, or Sitaji, whom millions of Indians consider to be the incarnation of the Goddess. Rama, an emperor's son, lived in his guru's ashram for twelve years, sleeping on the floor and tending the guru's cattle. When he returned home, instead of a coronation, he was exiled to the forest. If your mother-in-law threw you out of your home, how would you feel? Then one year before his period of exile was over, a powerful emperor kidnapped his wife. Is that not a tragedy?

Even these men with miraculous powers, who could control the elements, who could control destinies, suffered because suffering is the salt of life. Why didn't Rama change his own destiny? Why didn't Sri Krishna change his own destiny? Sri Krishna's life was out and out suffering. Before

he was born he was on Kamsa's hit list and he faced many problems during his childhood. These great men were supposed to be prophets, sons of God or incarnations of God, yet they all suffered. Therefore, you must understand that suffering is the salt of life.

Only when you enter the furnace can you become gold. Sorrow is not an enemy. Sorrow and suffering are my friends. Happiness comes to destroy me. I am telling you from the depth of my heart that spiritual seekers must understand that God is the only source. God is the only support. If he wants you to do sadhana, do it. If he wants you to enjoy life, enjoy it. If he wants you to suffer, suffer. Become his servant. You have no choice because a servant has no choice. After all, why did he send you here in human form? After evolving through so many incarnations, you have become a human being. Yet, even after becoming a human being, you behave in the same way as an animal behaves.

SOCIETY

Householder life

The spiritual rules for a householder are different to those for a sannyasin. Spiritual rules also differ according to every situation; in the outside world and in the ashram they are never the same.

Grihastha ashrama is an ashram and a sadhana by itself, but people have misunderstood its meaning. They consider it to be a licensed place for sensual pleasure. They feel that they can consume alcohol and do whatever they like. However, grihastha ashrama is a training ground for spiritual life where recognized internal and external sadhanas are undertaken. Here one must learn tolerance. Is it not a good quality? Here one learns to serve others even at one's own cost. To cultivate this positive quality is also a sadhana.

In the vedic tradition our ancestors have given the status of ashram to grihastha ashrama. The word *ashram* means a place where an aspirant works hard. Grihastha ashrama

means a place where a householder works hard and the same holds true for a brahmacharin in brahmacharya ashrama, a vanaprastha in vanaprastha ashrama, and a sannyasin in sannyasa ashrama.

There are four types of *purusharthas*, or endeavours: *dharma*, duty, *artha*, wealth, *kama*, desire, and *moksha*, liberation. For a grihastha, three are important: dharma, artha and kama. For a vanaprastha, there are two: dharma and moksha. A sannyasin has only one text book, moksha, to be learned, but a householder has a large syllabus: dharma, artha and kama. You have to learn various aspects of these three subjects in your life. Singing bhajans, doing spiritual sadhana, japa, meditation, kirtan, asana and pranayama are part of your dharma purushartha, not that of moksha purushartha.

Why? Because your mind should be steady and balanced to perform dharma. If your mind is upset and imbalanced, you cannot cultivate qualities like forgiveness, compassion, mercy, tolerance and fearlessness. You should have tolerance, fearlessness and a feeling of sacrifice. With the help of dharma, you can achieve a balanced mind. From dharma, you further proceed to achieve artha and kama. In *Ramacharitamanas* the Lord talks about the chariot of dharma:

Listen, O friend, said the treasure of mercy,
The chariot which leads to victory is of a different make.
Valour and fortitude are the wheels of that chariot,
Truth and virtuous conduct are its flags and banners,
Strength, discretion, self-control and kindness its horses,
Harnessed with forgiveness, compassion and equality.
The bhajan of the Lord is the skilled charioteer,
Dispassion is his shield and contentment his sword,
Charity is his axe and intelligence his fierce lance,
Supreme wisdom is his bow, a peaceful mind his quiver,
Containing the arrows of quietude, restraint and order.
Homage to Brahman and Guru are his buckler,

There is no other way to ensure victory than this.
O my friend, one who rides upon such a chariot
Of righteousness has no enemy to conquer anywhere.

If you do not follow dharma on the way to artha and kama, artha and kama will always lead you to the path of *adharma*. Is it not so? Artha means the same everywhere, acquiring wealth, and kama means desire. There are three kinds of desire in this world: for a woman, wealth and children. These three desires or wishes are in everybody. Nobody is free from them. A few people, not everyone, have an additional desire for fame and power. How are you going to strike a balance between these three desires which are inborn in all human beings?

This subject has to be given due consideration by the householders in grihastha ashrama. You are likely to fall if you do not apply a brake on the artha and kama aspects. This could destroy your entire energy. When you are properly balanced within on account of the presence of dharma, you will be in a position to implement the artha and kama aspects in your life. This is the syllabus for grihastha ashrama spiritual life.

Marital relationships

The husband should be like Rama to the wife, and the wife should be like Sita to the husband. However, it does not happen, because this is an ideal; nobody applies it to their life. That is why the relationship between man and woman has not produced any positive result. In tantra, it is clearly stated that the relationship between a man and a woman has three purposes: first, progeny, second, pleasure, and third, samadhi. You have had the first and the second experience, but how many have had the third? Have you had an awakening? No, because the relationship between husband and wife must be adjusted in youth and often during old age.

A man of eighty and his wife of seventy may still love each other. What problem is there? Love has nothing to do with the body; it is a feeling, and the sexual relationship is an

expression of it. However, that is not the total definition of love; it is not even a definition at all. The marital relationship is purely spiritual, and it has to be readjusted, redefined, recodified. What is this relationship? Is it only for progeny, only for pleasure? No, kundalini awakening can take place and does take place through this relationship. It has taken place in many tantric yogis, and tantric texts are the chronicles.

Sita and Rama loved each other so much in order to show us how we should live. The message sent by Lord Rama to Sita through Hanuman touches the heart:

*Tatva prema kara mama aru torā
Jānata priyā eku manu morā,
So manu sadā rahata tohi pāhīm
Jānu prīti rasu etanehi māhīm.*

O my beloved,
The secret of our love is known to my mind only,
And that mind is always directed towards you.
Now only you can fathom the depth of our love.

(SK after *do* 14)

After returning from Lanka, Hanumanji describes the condition of Sita to Rama:

*do – Nāma pāharū divasa nisi dhyāna tumhāra kapāṭa
Locana nija pada jantrita jāhīm prāna kehīm bāṭa*

Your name was the guard, day and night,
And meditation on you was the shutter.
The eyes were fixed on your feet.
How then could her prana leave the body?

(SK *do* 30)

In modern life, that ideal is changing. For the last hundred-fifty years, people have not necessarily agreed with this ideal. They say, “If the husband is good, I will love him,” or “If the wife is good, I will love her; but if she is bad, then I will divorce her.” This is the trend, and there is a reason for it

also. There are many husbands who treat their wives badly, who snatch away their ornaments, sell them in the market, and then go to the race course. There are bad men in the world, and that is why the change has taken place.

Rama and Sita

Ever since Rama and Sita saw each other in the garden at Mithila, they loved one another intensely. That love was of the highest nature. While living in the world such events do happen, but that doesn't mean that there was some shortcoming, discrepancy, difference or rejection in the love of Sita and Rama. In certain situations, even between a mother and son, husband and wife or brother and sister, it may become necessary for one to tell the other to leave. After all, Rama was a responsible person and accountable for what was happening in his kingdom. However, he had an agreement with Sita and the whole world knows it. As per their agreement, if Sita and Rama lived apart, no one can say anything about it.

The separation of Sita and Rama, Sita's living in the kingdom of Ravana, Rama's trials in the forest, the killing of Ravana to rescue Sita – all these events tell us different things. They are not the continuation of one pattern, many patterns are interwoven here. A husband and wife may live separately for reasons which are not known to others. You may wonder what the reason was for such an arrangement. What is wrong if Rama and Sita had an agreement to live apart? Sita stayed in the ashram of a sage. There is nothing wrong with a pregnant woman living in an ashram. Was it wrong for Rama to send Sita to an ashram because of social criticism? He did not take away any of her rights.

Women

In Sundarakanda Tulsidas states that:

*Ḍhola gavāññra sūdra pasu nārī
Sakala tāṛanā ke adhikārī,*

Low castes, the ignorant, drums,
Animals and women all require beating.

(SK after *do* 58)

Here the word *taadnaa* does not mean ‘to beat’. *Taadnaa* is derived from the noun *traataka* and, therefore, should be interpreted as ‘to watch intently or carefully’. This sentence is an interpolation, perhaps added by people. Tulsidas was a saint, a knowledgeable person, a *jnani*. The seers always propound that truth which is universal, uniform and internal. It is never limited to a particular time, place or person. The most important thing, however, is not whether Tulsidas considers that women deserve a beating. Whether or not women deserve a beating is immaterial because today women are considered as deserving love.

I have been asked over a thousand times to comment on the verse in *Ramacharitamanas* in which it is written that women and shudras need to be beaten. This verse comes at the end of Sundarakanda, when Lord Rama first prayed to the King of the ocean to give way. At that point it is said: “Drums, villagers, shudras, animals and women, all deserve beating.” It seems that this verse has been added later. Tulsidas could not have written this. My mind does not accept it. If you remove this verse, you will find that the verses above and below match exactly. When I removed this verse from the text and read it, I found absolute continuity. In the ancient texts, superfluous things have been added everywhere. There are many verses which are attributed to Kabir, but they were never written by him. Superfluous things exist in the Koran and Bible. I have seen a *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* of 450 verses and also one of 1,500 verses. This *Bhagavad Gita* of 700 verses which we read is said to be the only reliable *Bhagavad Gita*, but a *Bhagavad Gita* of 450 verse also exists.

This means that during the ages scriptures have passed through several hands, and during reproduction, verses have been lost or added. Therefore, it is the job of critics

to find these discrepancies and superfluous modifications. In the *Ramayana* you can see the verses where shudras and brahmins are criticized, and where brahmins deserve honour and where shudras deserve honour. The tribal king of the Nishadas was a shudra. Shabari also belonged to the same category. So this verse, “Drum, villagers, shudras, animals and women, all deserve beating” looks out of place to me. When you read it again, delete this verse and you will find continuity.

Woman was your mother. She was also mine. There is nothing in *Ramacharitamanas* that can be interpreted like that. In any scripture there are different viewpoints. It depends on who is speaking, whether it is Ravana or Rama. There cannot be one single view. The point is whether the devil or God is saying it. Sometimes there are interpolations where lines have been inserted after the text has been written.

You should also consider that from time to time our society has had various ideas about women. It is only today that women are freer and able to speak out. There was a time when they were used as slaves. Even now they are all *naukaranis*, maidservants. That has to be corrected, but in *Ramacharitamanas*, the author, Tulsidas, has very great respect for womankind.

Mandodari and Ravana

Women have a spiritual nature. They have more faith than men, a greater inclination towards religion and they are honest. If women were not honest they would not be housewives, because men would not leave the key with them.

I think women are honest by nature. If you behave well with them, they are totally trustworthy, but if you behave like a demon they may betray you. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, had great respect for her husband, but she also had great respect for Rama and she did not accept Ravana’s kidnapping of Sita. Ravana had brought many women into the harem and she did not mind, but when he kidnapped

Sita and brought her back to Lanka, Mandodari said, “This is not right.” Even then, right until the last day of the battle, she never betrayed Ravana.

When Ravana was killed, she said, “How many times did I tell you not to do this, but you would not listen to me. You had so many wives, but I never objected. Only in Sita’s case did I object because kidnapping her was wrong. Sita is not an ordinary woman, she is Divinity personified.” All the other women of the harem wanted to go to Ravana because they thought he was a powerful man and they would have a nice time with him, but Sita was not like that because she was divinity personified. Every woman has that trait, whether she is your daughter, wife, sister or even disciple.

Children

I think it is necessary for children to be mischievous. If they are not allowed to be mischievous and are suppressed or restricted, they will become bad later and their parents will not be able to control them. When children are naughty in a small flat, it is difficult for their parents to handle them due to restricted space, but if there is a property like we have in the ashram, who cares. Let the children run five times from this end of the boundary to that end, then they will be tired and sleep well. With children brought up in flats it is more difficult. Therefore, the entire culture of people living in flats is different from the culture which you see in the ashram. Here, children can play, make mischief and exhaust all their energy. That kind of mischief is *bal leela*.

Children have an excess of energy. Therefore, they should run, play, and enjoy a lot of sports. It is not good for them to simply sit and study alone. Their energy has to be balanced. All parents have a bad habit of nagging their children, “You are not studying. Have you done your homework?” Children are never asked, “Why don’t you go and play football?” Parents never tell them, “There is a good movie showing today. Take some money and go and see it.”

In India, when children want to see movies, their parents agree reluctantly. They think their children have the same level of consciousness as they do.

The level of consciousness of the father and that of his son, who is five or six, are entirely different. When the son says, “I want to see a movie,” there is a different idea in his mind than when the father who is twenty-eight or thirty wants to see a movie. Their attitude and awareness are different. Children do not have an impure motivation; their level of awareness is high. Children are close to God. This is not a stereotyped phrase; it is true that children are pure. The moment we grow up, the distance between us and God widens. We learn a lot of wickedness. This state of innocence is described in the first part of *Ramacharitamānas* in which the childhood of Rama is described:

*Bhojana karata bola jaba rājā
Nahim āvata taji bāla samājā,
Kausalyā jaba bolana jāī
Ṭhumuku ṭhumuku prabhu calahim parāī.*

*Nigama neti siva anta na pāvā
Tāhi dharai janani haṭhi dhāvā,
Dhūsara dhūri bhareṁ tanu āe
Bhūpati bihasi goda baiṭhāe.*

do – *Bhojana karata capala cita ita uta avasaru pāī,
Bhāji cale kilakata mukha dadhi odana lapaṭāī.*

While taking food, when the King calls Rama
He does not leave the company of his friends.
When Kaushalya goes to call him,
The Lord struts and runs far away.
The mother runs to catch hold of Him by force,
He, who is not conceivable even by the holy scriptures
Which say that He is unknowable;
Even Lord Shiva is unable to know Him.
At last, when He comes in covered with dust,
The king takes Him in his lap.

Smiling, He takes his food in a hurried manner,
And whenever He finds opportunity,
Runs away with a joyful shout,
His face smeared with curd and rice.

(BK before *do* 203)



8

Mind Management

I want to give you a few ideas, simple ones, not just religious ones. These ideas are intimately related to our daily life. Everyone, whether Christians, Hindus or Muslims, whether they are rich or poor, men or women – their peace of mind has been highjacked. Everyone's peace of mind has been highjacked. We feel disturbed. Don't we? Where is *shanti*, peace? Where is she? Who will tell us? Where has she gone? Where has our peace of mind gone? What is this peace? Is she a damsel? Is she an idea? Is she an experience? How did you find peace of mind? How do you define 'peace of mind'?

When we say *Aum shantih, shantih, shantih* three times it is for peace of the total mind: the conscious mind, the subconscious mind and the mind, which you do not know, the unconscious mind. Peace in the conscious mind means peace upon earth; peace in the subconscious mind means peace in the skies or under the earth; then there is peace in heaven and everywhere.

I am talking about the peace 'that passeth all understanding'. I am not talking about that peace of mind where you delude yourself by taking a few tranquillizers. I am not talking about that peace which gives you a good sleep. I am talking about that peace which is called *Aum shantih, shantih, shantih* – and that peace has been highjacked and we do not know where she is.

Everyone is searching – the individual soul, you and me as individuals, we are all searching for peace. Where has shanti gone? Far, far away – that is the answer. But where is that far, far away? Has the shanti gone to England? Who has kidnapped her? Has she gone to China, far, far away? Or has she gone to the Netherlands?

A monkey is taking a flight to find out where peace has been hidden, where she is lying captive surrounded by the ten senses, the *dasha indriyani*. Shanti has been kidnapped by you because you have become the slave of tensions, you have become a slave of the ten senses. This ten-headed monster known as the indriyas lives in a palace. Ten-headed Ravana lives in a city, or a citadel, which is golden, not stone. And whose is that citadel? Your body is the *puri*, the city, where peace of mind has been held in captivity. It means that you have to search for peace within yourself, not outside. This is the sum and substance of what these people have been singing about so gladly.

A ten-headed demon kidnapped Sita, the symbol of supreme peace. She is Maha Devi.

*Duyah Shantih Antariksham Shantih
Prithivee Shantih Aapa shantih
Oshadayah Shantih Vanaspathayah Shantih
Vishvedevah Shantih Brahma Shantih
Sarvam Shantih Shantirevah Shantih
Saa Maa Shatiredhi*

Peace in heaven, peace in space
Peace on earth, peace in the waters
Peace to the herbs, peace to the trees
Peace to the universal God, peace to the Creator
Peace to the whole, peace, only peace
Peace will grant me peace.

We hear these mantras, then repeat *Aum shantih, shantih, shantih*. because everyone wants peace, and this peace itself is Sita, who has been kidnapped by our ten senses and kept

as a prisoner in this golden Lanka. Neither has your peace gone somewhere within you, nor has someone else disturbed your peace. You alone have disturbed it. You yourself are responsible for that. Our peace has vanished because we have become the slave of these ten senses.

Mental peace

I can only speak to you on the basis of what I have heard from others, because I have never suffered from mental disturbance in my life, not even for a single moment. I have always remained happy and care-free. The reason for this is my attitude of total acceptance of whatever situation I have come across in life. I accepted the parents I received and the circumstances that I was raised in. I accepted the guru I came across. I had no choice in these matters. For mental peace, two things are necessary: one is acceptance of one's situation in life, and the other is *bhakti*, devotion to the Lord. I am not talking of *pooja*, external worship. Bhakti means 'love for God', in the same way that you love your wife or your sisters.

Does food without salt have any taste? In the same way, life without bhakti is tasteless. A man without bhakti is similar to an unclothed woman bedecked in beautiful jewellery. Where is the beauty? Life without bhakti is like halwa without sugar, or upma without salt. Life without bhakti is incomplete. Nothing is more precious in the world than bhakti. It is more precious than gold, diamonds or pearls. Moreover, it is rare. Where there is bhakti, there is peace of mind.

There is no factory that manufactures peace of mind. Bhakti is a state in which there are no worries, likes, dislikes, love, hatred, anger or lust. When you are in equanimity, the mind is indifferent to money coming in or going out, to praise or criticism. Whether your son obeys you or not, you are at peace. Peace means acceptance of life. The attitude of bhakti is: I have left everything in Your hands; it is up to You to take me towards success or ruin.

Another way to attain peace is through satsang. A sick person goes to the doctor for a check-up and accepts

whatever medicine he is prescribed, whether homeopathic, allopathic, or ayurvedic. Similarly, the person whose mind is sick needs to go to a doctor. The doctor here is the guru, saints and sages. The medicines prescribed are the inspirations and truths received in satsang. Satsang definitely works. Its effects show up after one, two or three doses. When fifty bullets are fired, one will surely hit the target. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Shiva says to Parvati:

do – *Girijā santa samāgama sama na lābha kachu āna*
Binu hari kṛpā na hoi so gāvahim beda purāna

O Parvati,
The Vedas and Puranas proclaim
There is no gain like that
Of being in the company of saints.
But that also is not attainable
Without the grace of God.

(UK do 125 kha)

Further on, Tulsidas prescribes the cure for mental and psychological diseases. He says:

Rāma kṛpāñ nāsahim saba rogā
Jaum ehi bhāñti banai sañyogā,
Sadagura baida bacana bisvāsā
Sañjama yaha na bişaya kai āsā.

Raghupati bhagati sajīvana mūrī
Anūpāna śraddhā mati pūrī,

All the maladies are cured
If, by Rama's grace,
A favourable situation is created –
A holy guru is available as a physician
And there is utmost faith in what he says
And there is abstinence from sense enjoyment.
Devotion to Rama
Is the life-giving herb,

And the vehicle of this medicine
Is intellect full of intense faith.

(UK before *do* 121)

I have spoken of three methods to obtain peace: first, acceptance of life, second, bhakti or devotion towards the Lord, and third, satsang. However, I can also tell you that in this world no one is at peace. Nobody's mind is steady, not even for a minute. If you look carefully within yourself, you will find that your mind is unsteady because you enjoy being in that state. When your mind begins to calm down, you become fearful.

In meditation classes, it is common for people to experience fear when their mind becomes calm. In meditation when the mind starts to become one-pointed, a strange fear grips the practitioner. Even a knock at the door can startle you. In contrast, when you sit comfortably to let loose your imagination and weave a web of illusions, it is a pleasurable experience. Man loses himself in that pleasure. So, actually man wants to remain mentally disturbed. It is a kind of preoccupation.

Art of acting

Whenever you act, you have to disidentify yourself from your own personality. If you play the role of a father, you have to forget that you are Mr So and So, and identify yourself totally with the father. When you play the role of a lover, who is in love with a girl, you have to identify with her so much that you feel that she is really your beloved. You do not think that you are acting at that time. This is the best actor. Then there are the pitfalls and they are also part of the drama.

The different roles which an actor plays should not influence his real identity. That art you have to learn. How did Janaka, the father of Sita, live? He was a great king. A learned man, and the disciple of Sage Yajnavalkya, Janaka was said to be a videha mukta. When Rama came to Mithila, Janaka was moved. He said, "I am losing my personal identity. I am videha, nothing belongs to me. I am not the

body, not the mind, not the senses, not the *indriyas*. I am absolute Self.” When he saw Rama, he forgot everything. He fell in love with him.

*Mūراتi madhura manohara dekhī
Bhayau bidehu bidehu biseṣī*

By looking at the sweet and lovely Rama,
King Janaka lost his body consciousness.

(BK before *do* 215)

I have corrected many people in the film line, because they think that when they go into films, they fall and commit sins. There are many pitfalls in the film line, because you cannot be a good actor, a hero, unless you identify yourself totally with the role. At that time, you have to forget who you are and only remember that you are a lover, embracing your sweetheart. She is everything to you. You do not just sing a love song, you have to feel it, and this is the pitfall.

When that scene is complete, there must be total disidentification and that art I will teach you. I have practised it. That art can only be practised when you do not have a guilt complex. If you suffer from guilt, you can never get out of it, because the very concept of sin is disastrous for the human personality. When you identify totally with the things that are happening around you and cannot disidentify yourself from them, then you are a sinner. What is right and what is wrong? Where did you get your notions about dharma and adharma? From vedic grammar, Islam, Christianity, or from the modern social system? Who has defined what is right and what is wrong? There is no absolute concept. What you dislike is adharma and what you like is dharma.

Now, you do not want to act, because you think of all these pitfalls. I say no. Rama acted, Krishna acted. How Rama acted when Sita was kidnapped by Ravana! He was asking every tree, every creeper, every animal, “Where is my Sita? Have you seen which way she went? Who has taken

her?” Lakshman said, “Brother, you were so wise. You used to give us *upadesh*, instructions, and balance our minds. What has happened to you?”

*Hā guna khāni jānakī sītā
Rūpa sīla brata nema punītā,
Lachimana samujhāe bahu bhāñtī
Pūchata cale latā taru pāñtī.*

*He khaga mṛga he madhukara śrenī
Tumha dekhī sītā mṛganainī,*

Alas Sita, the daughter of King Janaka,
The fountain head of all virtues,
You are pure in form, nature,
Resolution and conduct.
Lakshman consoled him in many ways,
But he went on asking the creepers
And the leaves of the trees:
O birds, O animals, O group of black bees,
Have you seen Sita who has eyes like a doe?

(ARK after *do* 29)

When Rama sent a message to Sita through Hanuman, the message was so poignant: “Since you have gone, the rain that falls is boiling, the birds that sing prick my heart.”

*Kaheu rāma biyoga tava sītā
Mo kahuñ sakala bhae biparītā,
Nava taru kisalaya manahuñ kṣsānū
Kāla nisā sama nisi sasi bhānū.*

*Kubalaya bipina kunta bana sarisā
Bārida tapata tela janu barisā,
Je hita rahe karata tei pīrā
Uraga svāsa sama tribidha samīrā.*

Rama said, O Sita, your separation
Has turned everything against me.

The new leaves of the trees
Have become like glowing fire to me.
The night is like death,
The moon has become the burning sun.
The collection of lotus flowers has become a jungle of darts
And the clouds are pouring boiling oil.
All that was pleasant earlier has become painful now.
The cool, fragrant and slow breeze is blowing
Like serpent's breath.

(SK after *do* 14)

But if you believe in the thought: "I am pure consciousness, blemishless; nothing can touch me," then when something touches you, it only touches your external body, not your mind or soul. If you embrace a woman, what happens? You are only embracing some skin, creating some emotions for a short time, and entertaining these fools, that is all.

Bow of ego

Stringing the bow of the ego is difficult. The ego is the gross matter between God and me, the iron curtain that separates reality from appearance. If reality and appearance are to be united, this curtain of ego has to be lifted. Who can lift this bow? If we can string it, we can unite with prana shakti. Thousands of kings, emperors and powerful princes came to string the bow, but they could not budge it. Why talk of fixing the mind, which one cannot move or even touch? How can one fix the ego, the identification with oneself? That is a hard bow.

In *Ramacharitamanas* it is said King Janaka vowed that only he who could string the bow would wed his daughter, Sita. Many kings and powerful princes came, but none could string it. Rama not only strung the bow, he broke it in two. The bow broke while he was stringing it. Now what is this bow? It is duality, the separation between you and me. It is the mind, the maya between God and me.

Egodectomy

These problems arise when the ego operates. When you go on an ego trip, you should have an egodectomy, like you have a tonsillectomy or a hysterectomy. If you know that your mind, your aspirations and everything in your life is illumined with divine light, effulgence and divine realization, then everything goes smoothly. But when the purpose of somebody's interaction with you or me on a personal basis is motivated, not by devotion or bhakti, but by ego, there is always a difference. So many minds pulling in different directions will blow a fuse.

The basic thing which is lacking in most people today is a spiritual aim. Your spiritual aims are not well defined. What is your spiritual aim? Suppose you want to discover your relationship with God, in order to do that, first you would need to consult books, sadhus, mahatmas, saints and learned people. Then you would practise meditation in order to make your mind sharp and subtle, so that you could discover your relationship with God. Either you have a proper spiritual aim which you identify yourself with or you call yourself a disciple of Swami Satyananda and Swami Sivamurti is your gurubhai. What difference does it make who is the guru and who the gurubhai? We are all the same.

Secondly, you must remember that when you use the word 'organization', you are talking about a number of organs which work together to support a particular structure or aim. This body is an organization. The eyes can see but the mouth cannot; the nose can smell, but the ears cannot; the feet can run, but the hands cannot. Every organ and part of the body has a distinct role to play. What happens when the different parts of the body begin to feel jealous of each other, the eyes feel jealous of the nose, the nose of the ears? We lose our sense of harmony and wellbeing. We cannot function efficiently or we may fall ill. This is what is happening in our organizations.

Somebody may be a good manager, somebody else a good singer, writer, speaker or think-tank. It is natural for

the think-tank to go on ego trips, and he will not think well if he doesn't. At the same time, those who are not such good thinkers will feel jealous. Everybody goes into ecstasy when they listen to a person who can sing well. This boosts his or her ego and others who cannot sing so well feel jealous. So these are the shortcomings which are part and parcel of the human personality. Where there is authority or accomplishment, there will be ego or pride, and others will become jealous.

Only those who are cautious and alert can be exceptions to this rule. Even though one tries to be careful, the virus gets in somewhere. This cannot be avoided, because the virus of pride is a natural component of genius, there are few people in our society who have had power without the intoxication that comes with it. You find them sometimes, you sniff them out in some corner or other through their speech, thinking, actions, reactions and in other ways. Administrators must always be aware of this. In *Ramacharitamānas* it says:

*Guna kṛta sanyapāta nahim̐ kehī
Kou na māna mada tajeu nibehī,
Jobana jvara kehī nahim̐ balakāvā
Mamatā kehī kara jasa na nasāvā.*

*Macchara kāhi kalaṅka na lāvā
Kāhi na soka samīra ḍolāvā,
Cintā sāṅpini ko nahim̐ khāyā
Ko jaga jāhi na byāpī māyā.*

*Kīṭa manoratha dāru sarīrā
Jehi na lāga ghuna ko asa dhīrā,
Suta bita loka iṣanā tīnī
Kehi kai mati inha kṛta na malīnī.*

Breathes there a man on this earth
Who does not suffer from the delusion of the gunas?
Who is free from the bondage of ego and pride?
Who is not intoxicated by the fever of youth?

Whose fame is not debased
By the feeling of 'I and mine'?
Who envy has left untainted?
Who remains unmoved by the gales of sorrow?
Who the serpent of anxiety does not bite?
Who is free from the clutches of Maya?
Who the worm of desire does not devour,
Valiant though he may certainly be?
Whose mind is not eclipsed by desire
For wealth, power, name and fame?

(UK after *do* 70)

The main aim is to get the work done. So the administrator must have a greater ability than those who are being administered. The blame for organizational problems does not lie with the workers, it lies with the administrator. A capable administrator must have certain abilities, especially the ability to make decisions based on the experience of trial and error in life. I have had three great experiences in my life. One was the twelve years which I spent with my guru, Swami Sivananda. That was a period of rich experience in all kinds of things like writing, translating, printing. It was also a useful experience for dealing with anger and developing tolerance.

Ultimately I realized that every man has his own self-respect. When I was able to recognize and respect this quality in each individual, I could take everyone into my confidence and get the maximum contribution from each person whether in the form of work or anything else required. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Sri Rama exemplifies this form of respect when he says to Sumanta, his minister:

*Tumha puni pitu sama ati hita moreñ
Binatī karauñ tātā kara joreñ,*

You are like my father and a great benefactor,
I request you with folded hands.

(AYK after *do* 95)

Sita also says to him:

*Tumha pitu sasura sarisa hitakārī
Utaru deun̄ phiri anucita bhārī,*

You are my benefactor, like my father and father-in-law;
if I give a reply, it will be highly improper.

(AYK before *do* 97)

When Hanuman returned with information about the whereabouts of Sita, Sri Rama said to him:

*Sunu suta tohi urina main̄ nāhīm
Dekheun̄ kari bicāra mana māhīm,*

Listen, my son,
I will never be free from my obligation to you.
I have given this due thought and I confirm it.

(SK before *do* 32)

All these are examples of communication skills.

Moha

Moha, meaning infatuation or attachment, is a habit. *Moha* is not the truth. For thousands of years, we have been given the training of *moha* right from early childhood. This is because man wants to keep society bound together like a garland, like the beads of a mala. *Moha* is the name of the thread which accomplishes this purpose. This thread binds beads, gems and other precious stones together. These beads are the husband, wife, children, parents and in-laws. All of them remain together because of *moha*. Once the thread is broken, the beads will fall here and there. The relationships between the people will break.

Moha is a creation of society, not of prakriti. While explaining *moha* in relation to different aspects of mental disorder, Tulsidas writes in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Moha sakala byādhinḥa kara mūlā
Tinha te puni upajahiṁ bahu sūlā,
Kāma bāta kapha lobha apārā
Krodha pitta nita chātī jārā.*

*Prīti karahiṁ jaum tīniu bhāi
Upajai sanyapāta dukhadāi,*

Delusion is the root cause of all ailments.
Many other diseases spring from it:
Lust is uncontrollable like the wind.
Unfathomable greed is phlegm.
Anger is bile
Constantly burning the heart
Of the diseased man.
If all three make an alliance,
A state of acute delirium occurs
Which is highly painful.

(UK after *do* 120)

Then why does the guru come? If there is moha between guru and disciple, both will be ruined. You hold me and I hold you, but neither of us knows how to swim. You will ask me to save you and I will ask you to save me, but both of us will drown.

One should not have moha with anyone, not even with one's body, let alone with the guru. There is only one with whom we can transform our moha and offer it in the form of bhakti. That is God, whether *sakara*, with form, or *nirakara*, without form.

There is one God, whose form neither you nor I have seen. Nevertheless, we have to find our relationship with Him. We have to work at finding our relationship with Him and then accept Him as our all. God is everything; this should be our attitude. Life is meaningless without this perspective. Whether you understand it or not, this is the truth. I am in the human body and so are you. The laws that control the human body are the same. I am not beyond prakṛiti and neither are you. Neither you nor I are masters

of prakriti. The law of prakriti says that where there is moha, there is bondage. It is the eternal law.

To be free of bondage, one has to be free of moha. This is the eternal law of nature. To become free from moha, we maintain our relationship with the guru until there is no more moha. When you have moha with God, there is no bondage, because God has no body. Therefore, the laws of karma do not operate with Him.

Maya

When your mind loves God, thinks of Him and lives in Him, then where is the maya? If you put the light on in your room at night, you don't care if there is darkness outside because there is light in the room. In the same way, if your mind is filled with God, bhakti, surrender and devotion, there is no maya. When you switch the light on, there is no darkness. That is the law. It has been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

do – *Rāma nāma manidīpa dharu jiha deharīm dvāra*
Tulasī bhītara bāherahuñ jaum cāhasi ujīāra

If you desire to illumine
The inner and outer dimensions,
Keep the radiant jewel of the name of Rama
Ever between the tongue and throat.

(BK do 21)

Mind control

How can you? If you want to collect water it has to be kept in a vessel or a glass, but you want to collect it on the ground where it will run off in different directions. The way has clearly been defined in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Jananī janaka bandhu suta dārā
Tanu dhanu bhavana suhrda parivārā,
Saba kai mamatā tāga baṭorī
Mama pada manahi bāñdha bari ḍorī.

*Samadarasī icchā kachu nāhīm
Haraṣa soka bhaya nahīm mana māhīm,
Asa sajjana mama ura basa kaiserī
Lobhī hṛdayaṁ basai dhanu jaiserī.*

Those who collect strings of attachment
Body, wealth, house, friends and family,
With mother, father, relations, sons, wife,
Make a rope out of them and tie it to my feet.
Those who are impartial, having no desires,
In whose heart there is no place
For happiness and sorrow, courage and fear,
Such bhaktas reside in my heart,
In the same manner as riches
Reside in the heart of a greedy man.

(SK after *do* 47)

If you want to collect water, get a glass ready first and then pour the water into it, so the water is contained in one place. You have to provide a base so the water does not run everywhere. In the same way, you need a base for the mind so that it becomes stable. You need a basis to control the mind. At present, your basis is defective. It is like a container with a hundred holes; the water escapes as soon as you pour it into the container. It is better to get a new container rather than plugging up the holes. The cost is the same.

Stabilizing the mind in one place is called yoga. The mind is always active. This is a truth. Everyone's mind is always restless. Yoga is fixing the mind at one point. The means adopted to reach this end is also called yoga. Yoga is the means and the end. When the mind becomes restless, it needs to be stabilized, and by stabilizing the mind, one attains yoga. When the mind becomes quiet, that is the state of yoga. The means to attain this end is also called yoga.

The mind is your friend when it is under control. When the mind is not under control it is your worst enemy. In fact, man's mind is the cause of both his bondage and his

freedom. You should know the totality of the mind: the vrittis, sankalpas, passions, karmas, influences, innate desires, instincts. You should know everything. Once you know the mind, you will know how to serve it, because the mind is not your enemy, it is your friend.

Vipassana

Forget about climbing up. It is not necessary to advance at this point. There is a way, but until you finish your trip here, how can you go up? The mala moves in the hand, the tongue moves in the mouth, the mind roams in ten directions. This, indeed, is not remembrance of the Lord. You tend to forget this. The mind is restless and you want to focus it. What do you do? You light a lamp in the room and open up the doors and windows. The lamp flickers, extinguishes and you go on striking the matchsticks. You do not want to shut the windows, but you want the lamp to be steady. Similarly, in order to calm the mind, you have to close the windows. This may seem difficult, but until it is done, do not talk about going ‘up there.’ This point has been explained very beautifully in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Sohamasmi iti br̥tti akhaṇḍā
Dīpa sikhā soi parama pracandā,
Ātama anubhava sukha suprakāsā
Taba bhava mūla bheda bhrama nāsā.*

*Prabala abidyā kara parivārā
Moha ādi tama miṭai apārā,
Taba soi buddhi pāi uñjiārā
Ura grhañ baiṭhi granthi niruārā.*

*Chorana granthi pāva jaum̐ soi
Taba yaha jīva kṛtāratha hoī,
Chorata granthi jāni khagarāyā
Bighna aneka karai taba māyā.*

*Riddhi siddhi preraī bahu bhāī
Buddhihi lobha dikhāvahim āī,*

*Kala bala chala kari jāhim samīpā
Añcala bāta bujhāvahim dīpā.*

*Hoi buddhi jaum parama sayānī
Tinha tana citava na anahita jānī,
Jaum tehi bighna buddhi nahim bādhi
Tau bahori sura karahim upādhi.*

*Indrīm dvāra jharokhā nānā
Tahañ tahañ sura baiṭhe kari thānā,
Āvata dekhahim biṣaya bayārī
Te haṭhi dehim kapāṭa ughārī.*

*Jaba so prabhañjana ura grhañ jāi
Tabahim dīpa bigyāna bujhāi,
Granthi na chūṭi miṭā so prakāsā
Buddhi bikala bhai biṣaya batāsā.*

The constant awareness that 'I am That'
Is the lamp's most brilliant flame.
When the bliss of self-realization sheds its bright lustre
The delusion of duality,
The root of worldly existence, is dispelled.
The deep darkness of lust, moha and tamas,
The whole family of powerful avidya, disappears.
When the light of self-realization is gained thus,
The intellect rests in the chamber of the heart,
Untying the knot of ignorance.
If that knot of ignorance is untied,
Then the jivatma is fulfilled.
But, O King of birds,
When illusion finds that the knot is about to be untied,
She creates different kinds of hindrances.
O brother, she sends much prosperity and perfection
That tempts the intellect towards greed.
Artifice, force or fraud go near and put out the light
With the wind of their garments.
If the intellect is careful enough,
She will not allow them to execute their harmful intentions.

If these hindrances fail to distract the intellect,
Then the senses proceed to create trouble.
The doors of the senses are like portals to the heart
Where gods have made their seats.
Whenever they see a gust of sensuality approaching,
They obstinately throw open the doors.
As soon as that strong gust of wind
Enters the chamber of the heart
It forthwith extinguishes the lamp of wisdom.

(UK after *do* 117)

Yoga means to calm the restless mind, and yoga also means the techniques which calm the mind: raja yoga, hatha yoga, etc. When the restless mind is quietened, it is said that yoga has been achieved. Yoga is a practice and an attainment too. It is difficult to talk about it. I tell everyone that first it is necessary to sort out artha and kama. King Janaka was liberated though he lived amongst passions. He had immense properties and wealth, position and power. He had everything, but he was calm.

There have been many such people who have lived a disciplined life and still followed the path of *purushartha*, self-effort, while living in the world. They have all done their duties, worked hard, but, in the midst of all, they were able to remain calm. I saw Gandhi during my youth. Even in old age, he had surprising *purushartha*. He was always calm and quiet despite the political upheavals, clashes, killings, and robberies. A person who can keep himself calm in the midst of money and passion, is worthy of praise. In the *Bhagavad Gita*(2:71), Lord Krishna says: "That man who renounces all desires, gives up all ties, and becomes egoless and detached, achieves tranquility of mind, even while performing action."

Just as all rivers flow into the sea and lose their individual existence at that point, in the same way, let all of your desires and fantasies flow, then anchor them at the point where they cease flowing. That central point has to be located, then you move beyond vipassana or you will remain stuck there.

Sadhana

Tulsidas has elaborated on sadhana in *Ramacharitmanas*, in the form of a dialogue between Garuda and Kakabhushundi:

O king of birds,
The path of jnana is a razor's edge.
The man who treads this path falls,
Only he who completes the journey successfully
Attains to the supreme state of final liberation.
But this supreme state is very difficult to attain,
So declare the saints, Puranas, Vedas and Agamas.
However, by worshipping Rama, the same liberation
Comes automatically, even against our will.

Garuda does not understand why Kakabhushundi is so critical of *kaivalyapada*, the path of liberation, when it has been praised by the saints and sages. Kakabhushundi replies, "Look Garudaji, what the sages have said is all true. The path of nirvikalpa samadhi is difficult. In *nirbeeja samadhi* a person should sit like Sage Valmiki, who remained motionless in padmasana, even though his body was covered with white ants." This path is like walking the razor's edge. That is why it is not possible for people of this era, who are completely engrossed in maya, to practise sadhana.

Yoga

There are many geniuses in both East and West, who can devote their entire lives to the pilgrimage into their own self – the 'flight into the unknown'. This is a totally uncharted path that is infinite. They go deeper and deeper and find so many jewels. Scientists also do the same thing. I was reading an incident about Newton. A friend of Newton's invited him to dinner. Newton came in the evening, but by that time his friend had gone to a funeral, leaving a note for him on the table that said, "I am sorry, but now I will not be able to entertain you."

Newton decided to sit down anyway. It was 6 pm when he arrived. When his friend returned the next morning,

he opened the door and found Newton still sitting there. He said, “Didn’t you see my note?” Newton did not realize that the whole night had passed, because he had been engrossed all that while in his mathematical problem. It was morning, yet Newton had no knowledge of whether his friend had come for dinner or not. Had it been one of us, we would have fretted over our host’s absence every fifteen minutes, and after an hour or so we would have tried to ring him or at least look for the housekeeper. Our equations are totally different to those people who are not engrossed in the world.

If your mind is not attracted towards the things of the world and cannot deal with them or enjoy them, what does it mean? It means that your mind is fixed somewhere else. It is preoccupied, either with mathematics, some story, some worry or anxiety, some discovery, some dreams or fantasies. The whole night can pass; you are not interested in your spouse. The wife complains, “What is this? You come home and sit by yourself in silence. You do not talk to me.” But the husband is engrossed in another thought, which is so deep that he is not aware of his body, of time, of his surroundings or of food and drink. Later on, he becomes oblivious even to the calls of nature.

This is the state of yoga, which can be attained by a painter, a sculptor, a sadhu, a mahatma or a yogi, but such people are few. In *Ramacharitamānas* there is reference to Rishi Sutikshna. When he heard the news that Lord Rama was arriving, his heart dipped into the ocean of bliss.

*Nirbhara prema magana muni gyānī
Kahi na jāi so dasā bhavānī,
Disi aru bidisi pantha nahim sūjhā
Ko maini caleun kahān nahim būjhā.*

*Kabahuṁka phiri pāchem puni jāi
Kabahuṁka nṛtya karai guna gāī,
Abirala prema bhagati muni pāi
Prabhu dekhaim taru oṭa lukāī.*

O Bhavani, the wise sage
Was so overwhelmed with love,
His condition cannot be described.
He was unable to even see the way
And did not know which direction to follow.
He did not know who he was
Or where he was going.
Sometimes he left, then returned again,
While sometimes he would dance
And sing the virtues of Lord Rama
Under the influence of intense love.
And, hiding behind a tree,
Lord Rama was watching with great delight.

(ARK after *do* 9)

I have met many people like that in England, America, Japan and India, who belong to a different dimension of consciousness. They are not aware of their need for food, drink or decent clothes. They are absolutely detached from their spouses and children. They give the impression of being mad and talk only about their obsession. It is an obsession with them, and this type of obsession is necessary on the spiritual path. On the spiritual path, you are treading exactly the same path which an artist, painter, philosopher or scientist is treading, but he has his frame of mind, while you have yours.

In your frame of mind, it is God; while in his, it is art, music, poetry or some mathematical principle, but the awareness is the same, and intuition comes only after the light shines from within you. In Sanskrit, intuition is *pratibha jnanam*. *Pratibha* means brilliance, when the light comes from within.

Last breath

My only wish is that, when my prana leaves the body, I may have the name of Govinda on my lips. While I live, let me remember Thy name and when I am dying, let the last breath of my life be Thy name.

There is something called the last breath. What should a man's thought be at the time of the last breath? Everybody has a last thought. You may not be aware of your first thought, because you were not totally conscious at that time, but there is certainly a last thought and a last breath. There is certainly a last action also, such as drinking water, doing japa, going to the toilet, talking to somebody. What should my last act, my last thought and my last breath be? Why, it should be God's name, because that thought determines our onward journey. Tulsidas has written:

*Janma janma muni jatanu karāhīm
Anta rāma kahi āvata nāhīm,*

Birth after birth the munis keep trying;
Still the name of Rama
Does not come from their mouths
At the time of death.

(KK after *do* 9)

Atma rati, relation with the self, is difficult. Why is it difficult? That is an important question. We have so many centres of distraction, attraction, diversion. A man who loves ten women cannot love one woman. A woman who loves ten men cannot love one man. *Atma rati* is difficult because there are so many diversions in the channel of love. You can see that the sun's rays are normally spread out. However, if you use a magnifying glass to focus the rays here at one point, the grass will start burning. The mind has to be concentrated, one-pointed, like the sun's rays in the magnifying glass. When you collect all the energy in one channel, you can run the generator and produce electricity.

In devotion to God, the bhakta is willing to do anything if it leads him closer to God. Once the devotee begins to experience the real devotion, his only concern is with Ishwara. Even if the whole world is against him, he is not bothered in the least, because the all-encompassing love of God is such that it engulfs the body, mind and entire being

of man. The ultimate of bhakti is union, when the jivatma and paramatma become one. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Valmiki says to Rama:

*Soi jānai jehi dehu janāī
Jānata tumhahi tumhai hoi jāī,
Tumharihi kṛpāñ tumhahi raghunandana
Jānahin bhagata bhagata ura candana.*

Only he whom You favour knows You,
And he becomes You by knowing You.
O Rama, the devotees know You only by Your grace,
And You are like scented sandalwood to their tender heart.

(AYK after *so* 126)



9

God's Will and Grace

*Soi sevaka priyatama mama soī
Mama anusāsana mānai joī,*

That servant is most dear to me
Who obeys my commands well.

(UK after *do* 42)

He gave me no choice. He made me leave my family, hearth and home. I did not know at the time that He was doing it that is the only difference. I thought I was leaving because I had developed vairagya, or because I wanted to awaken the kundalini, or because I wanted to know the atma or paramatma. This is what I was thinking. I was attributing everything to myself.

Then he asked me to live in Rishikesh. Rishikesh was my dream. I thought it was I who made it. It is not out of ego that I say this. For years together, day and night, I worked to build up the ashram there. From each and every brick, nail and door, I could now make a picture, but He asked me to leave. I left Rishikesh, but I did not know that I was following God's order. I thought that perhaps my guru was sending me for a greater mission. What ignorance, arrogance, maya! But I obeyed, that is all. I was not a disobedient servant, but I was an ignorant and a reluctant one. Tulsidas has described this beautifully in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Rijhata rāma saneha nisotem
Ko jaga manda malinamati motem.*

do – *Saṭha sevaka kī prīti ruci rakhihahim rāma kṛpālu,
Upala kie jalajāna jehim saciva sumati kapi bhālu.
Hauṁhu kahāvata sabu kahata rāma sahata upahāsa,
Sāhiba sītānātha so sevaka tulasīdāsa.*

Rama is pleased only with devotion
Otherwise who is more foolish and
Fickle-minded than me in the world?
Kind Rama will keep in mind
The love and interest of even the wicked servant,
He, by whose grace stones behave like boats
And foolish monkeys and bears become advisors.
Seeing a servant like Tulsidas
And a master like Rama, the husband of Sita,
People laugh, but it is Lord Rama who has to bear this.

(BK before do 28)

He asked me to go to Australia. He said, “It is a nice place with good, simple people. They like yoga. They need yoga. They will receive yoga. They will propagate yoga.” And so it happened. He asked me to go to Scandinavia. He told me the names of the people I should meet there. I went to them. Everywhere I went I received guidance, but I thought it was my inner being who was speaking, my supersoul! Who is my supersoul? God is the first and the last. There is no supermind, no supernatural consciousness. For me, these are all interpretations and definitions; they are our words, our lamentations. Everything is God, whom I have not seen or perhaps will not see in the future.

Laws of creation

He is the supreme authority. Similarly, there is a Central Government that makes laws. These laws are applied and the judgements are given by the district courts. Will the verdict of death by hanging come from the Central Government?

No. So, to say that not a leaf can move without God's will is rhetoric, mere talk. It actually means that all the events of this world are directed through the will of God. As long as the power station generates power, we will have electricity in our homes. Without power from the powerhouse, there will be no light in any house. God is that kind of centre.

God's maya has two natures. One is para prakriti and the other is apara prakriti. With the help of these two prakritis, He governs the entire creation. Then in this universe or cosmos, there are also ministries or departments. Varuna is the minister of water; Pavan is the minister of air. Similarly, He has different forces under His command to whom He has delegated His authority.

There is an incident in the *Ramayana*, when Lord Rama had drawn his bow and arrow to part the waters of the ocean. What did the ocean say? It said, "Lord, you are the one who has made the laws for the entire creation. Now, if you violate the laws which you yourself have made, how will they work?" Therefore, this saying that not even a leaf can move without God's will has to be understood in the right perspective.

*Sabhaya sindhu gahi pada prabhu kere
Chamahu nātha saba avaguna mere,
Gagana samīra anala jala dharanī
Inha kai nātha sahaja jaṛa karanī.*

*Tava prerita māyāñ upajāe
Sṛṣṭi hetu saba granthani gāe,
Prabhu āyasu jehi kahañ jasa ahaī
So tehi bhāñti raheñ sukha lahaī.*

*Prabhu bhala kīnha mohi sikha dīnhī
Marajādā puni tumhari kīnhī,
Ḍhola gavāñra sūdra pasu nārī
Sakala tāṛanā ke adhikārī.*

*Prabhu pratāpa maini jāba sukhāī
Utarihi kaṭaku na mori baṛāī,*

Prabhu agyā apela śruti gāī
Karaum̐ so begī jo tumhahī sohāī.

The god presiding over the ocean clasped the Lord's feet in dismay.

"Forgive, my Lord, all my faults. Ether, air, fire, water and earth – all these, my Lord, are dull by nature.

It is maya which brought them forth for the purpose of creation under an impulse from You;

So declare all scriptures.

One would attain happiness in life only by remaining where he has been placed by the Lord.

My Lord has done well in giving me a lesson, but You have fixed certain limits on everyone.

A drum, a rustic, a shudra, a beast and a woman – all these deserve instructions (low castes, the ignorant, drums, animals and women all require beating).

By the Lord's glory I shall be dried up and the army will cross over, but this will bring no credit to me.

Your command, however, is inviolable, thus declare the Vedas. I shall do at once what pleases you.

(SK after *do* 58)

Ultimately it is God's will and not mine that will prevail, in *Ramayana*, while consoling Bharata, Guru Vasishtha says:

Destiny is too powerful to be resisted,
Loss and gain, life and death, infamy and repute,
All are in the hands of the Almighty.

This is my philosophy in life. If I have to be a beggar, I will be a beggar. If I have to be debauched, I will be debauched.

I do not think that this universe works according to your wishes. It works on certain principles. There are certain laws of karma, certain laws of action and reaction. This is a perfect world made by a perfect being. God has no imperfections. God is most perfect. Whatever He has created, He has created with absolute laws.

God is all-merciful. He is the Poorna Paramatma. Whatever he does, he does correctly and to perfection. God has made a program for everyone.

Good and bad

If God had only made the rose without the thorns, it would have been nice. He created guava and papaya, but why did he create the bitter neem? I remember a line written by Mirza Ghalib – *Gule bekhar khuja ast*. *Gul* means ‘flower’, *bekhar* means ‘without thorns’, *khuja ast* means ‘where is it’. Where can you find roses without thorns? What is the basis of this strange world of God? Where there is light there is also darkness. Where does the shadow reside? If there is no light, there can be no shadow.

Similarly, where there is virtue, vice is sure to exist. Vice is the shadow of virtue. Evil exists to highlight the greatness of good. Make sure that you understand this or else you will hate anything that is negative or bad. We hate thieves and robbers and put them behind bars, thus ensuring that they become double crooks, then release them. Good and evil exist in this world in order to balance each other. If everyone becomes good in your house, there will be no fun in life. You cannot enjoy life in the absence of the devil. That is why God created the devil.

If your son is good, your daughter is good, your wife is nice, your husband is nice, your father is good, your mother is nice, the house is beautiful, there is plenty of money, then life becomes monotonous. There needs to be a contrast. The devil is the contrast to the Divine and that is why God created the devil. The devil has been created to highlight the glory of the Divine. If there were no devil, who would glorify the Divine? Who would sing the praises of the divine? It has been beautifully stated in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Bhaleu poca saba bidhi upajāe
Gani guna doṣa beda bilagāe.

*Kahahim beda itihāsa purānā
Bidhi prapañcu guna avaguna sānā,
Dukha sukha pāpa punya dina rāti
Sādhu asādhu sujāti kujāti.*

do – *Jaṛa cetana guna doṣamaya bisva kīnha karatāra
Santa haṁsa guna gahahim paya parihari bāri bikāra*

The Creator created both good and bad,
But the Vedas separated the objects of creation,
According to their qualities.
Thus originated affluence and adversity,
Vice and virtue, day and night,
Saint and villain, good and bad.
The Creator made beings animate and inanimate,
Of all qualities, both good and bad.
Saints, like the swan, have the capacity
To extract the good from the bad.
From a mixture of milk and water,
The swan takes out the milk and leaves the water.
Similarly, the saints are able to take the good
And leave out the bad from a mixture of both.

(BK before *do* 6)

Everywhere in life you find this polarity, this duality. That is why happiness and sorrow, good and evil, day and night, civilized and uncivilized, saintly and unsaintly exist everywhere side by side. This is a world of contrasts. God did not make it this way; it came into existence by itself. Where He made light, shadows appeared. Birth came and along with it death. He made happiness and along with it came sorrow. All this happens by itself.

Confusion versus clarity

There will not be any doubt in your mind about doing His will or your will. If you are doing something for Him, the questions will not be there. When you are doing as per

His command, your mind will have no doubts. The mind becomes absolutely clear like crystal.

Waxing and waning happens naturally in the path of bhakti also. Waxing and waning has to happen because it is an indicator of the expansion or progression of *bhavana*, feeling. Man experiences waxing and waning of material and mundane feelings also, because the feelings are not stable. When the mind is unstable, it experiences ups and downs. Similarly, when feelings are unstable, they have their ups and downs. To prevent these ups and downs, one must constantly do satsang. Satsang is a tool by which you can recharge your battery with bhavana the moment it is even slightly discharged. Thereby your bhavana will be steady and constant. In this regard, Lord Shiva himself said to Mother Parvati:

do – *Girijā santa samāgama sama na lābha kachu āna*
Binu hari kṛpā na hoi so gāvahim beda purāna

O Girija, there is no benefit like the company of saints,
But that also is not possible without the grace of God.
So it has been declared by the Vedas and the Puranas.

(UK do 125 kha)

Eventually you will be fixed in that state which is of a high order but right now the ups and downs are inevitable. The waxing and waning of spiritual consciousness is as natural as the waxing and waning of normal consciousness in human beings. During his evolution over the last million years, man has not had a steady consciousness. His consciousness has waxed and waned. It is becoming steady only now and it is so sweet at the moment.

The solution to the problem of life is God, but you have to forge a relationship with Him. You have to discover the relationship, because everyone is connected with Him, nobody is disconnected. All the bulbs, fridges, air conditioners are connected to the electrical line. Everything is connected, but you have to realize how you are connected.

You must be able to relate your feelings for God to the mundane level. Am I the daughter of God? Am I the son of God? Am I a darling of God? Am I a beloved of God? Am I a wife of God? Am I a husband? Who am I? Your question is right, but the answer will take time. You may not even get the answer, but you have to constantly seek out what your connection with God is. I am sure that everyone has some connection with God; you are not disconnected. Once you realize that, you will get everything.

I had that revelation after coming to Rikhia. Once I accepted God as my master, my mind became peaceful. If I am sleeping and my master calls me, “Wake up.” I reply, “Yes Master, what can I do for you?” He tells me, “Go and read *Ramayana*.” So I read *Ramayana*. The Lord himself has said:

*Mama māyā sambhava saṁsārā
Jīva carācara bibidhi prakārā,
Saba mama priya saba mama upajāe
Saba te adhika manuja mohi bhāe.*

*Tinha mahaññ dviija dviija mahaññ śrutidhārī
Tinha mahunñ nigama dharama anusārī,
Tinha mahaññ priya birakta puni gyānī
Gyānihu te ati priya bigyānī.*

*Tinha te puni mohi priya nija dāsā
Jehi gati mori na dūsari āsā,
Puni puni satya kahauñ tohi pāhīñ
Mohi sevaka sama priya kou nāhīñ.*

All creation is born of Me and all are dear to Me,
But, of all creatures, human beings are more pleasing.
Of all the human beings, the twice-born are dear,
And of them, the knowers of the Vedas are dear,
And of them, those who shape their lifestyle
According to the Vedic dharma are dear.
Amongst them, the renunciates are dear,
And of them, those who are jnanis are dear.

But, of these, the most dear are my servants,
Who have no way or hope other than Me.

(UK after *do* 85)

Sankalpa versus karma

If one has a strong *sankalpa*, one can overcome karma for some time, but not indefinitely. However, the person who makes the *sankalpa* will have to make certain concessions, certain promises, because when you overcome a karma, you have to replace it with something else. Something must be substituted to fill up that gap. It is possible to do this.

It is of utmost importance that when you ask God for the fulfilment of a wish, whether for a son, wife or money, you also make a *sankalpa*, a resolve, a promise to God that you will return to Him as much as He gives you. This is necessary because, ultimately, karma cannot be replaced; it has to be undergone. This is the rule of karma, that whatever karma you incur has to be worked out. If you want to avoid a karma, you can do so for some time, but eventually you will have to endure it.

Therefore, whatever you wish God to give, you must vow to give something equal in return: “O God, give me wealth and I vow to return it to You in equal measure; I will not keep it.” Then it is certain that the *sankalpa* will bear fruit. The Almighty only wants His disciples to remain true to Him. Why does man want wealth? Because he is weak. Wealth and children are not important, but because of his weakness, man asks God for such things. So, he should say, “God give me a son and I will offer him for Your service.” If you give your son for God’s service, it means only one thing: that you follow God’s path and you try to take others along also on that path. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Shiva says to Parvati:

O Parvati, that family line is blessed,
Which gives birth to such a man,
Who is worshipped by the whole world,
Who is pure, gentle, and loyal to Lord Rama.

Master puppeteer

Karma is like seeds of rice, wheat, coriander, corn or vegetables. They mature again and again. Due to karma we cannot act according to our free will. It is egoistic to say, “If I do good karma, I will negate the bad karma. If I go to satsang or perform two or three works of charity, I will negate my bad karma.” Although it is true that when you do good karma, the bad karma is balanced. Still the point is, are you free to do good karma? No, there is someone in you who is responsible, who guides you to do and not to do. So it is said: *Twayaa Hrisheekeshena hridisthitena, yathaa niyuktosmi tathaa katomi* – “I follow the dictates of Hrishikesha, the Lord seated within my own heart.”

Hrishikesha means Lord of the indriyas, of the senses, the inner Lord. You are in my heart. As you ask me, so I do. The indweller of our heart, in each and everyone, is an effulgent, conscious, intelligent, ever aware Self, which you call I, not the egoistic I, but the cosmic I, the light. It is through Him that the karmas can be balanced or negated. If man thinks he is free, he is wrong. If a man thinks he can do good acts, he is mistaken. We are like puppets.

In Kishkindhakanda of *Ramacharitamanas*, it is said:

*Umaa daaru joshit ki naaen
Sabahin nachaavat Raamu Gosaaen
Taba Sugreevahi aayasu deenhaa
Mritaka karma bidhivata saba keenhaa.*

(KK after *do* 10)

Daaru means wooden doll. Shiva tells Parvati that Gosainji, a name for the Lord, makes everyone dance like puppets. *Go* means indriyas or senses, *sai* means swami. The master of the indriyas or the senses is called Gosain. Govinda or Gosain means the same thing. The master of the senses is Govinda, who is making everybody dance like a puppeteer makes the puppets dance. He is the director, scriptwriter, project officer and designer. This is the ultimate fact.

When you have youth, lots of money and many friends you may not realize this. When a man is educated, wealthy and happy, he seems powerful. He can purchase anything, do anything, so he does not care for the reality. However, when a man has everything, but begins to question, “Am I the master of my karma, of my circumstances, of myself?” he realizes that, “I am not the master of myself.” Do I control my respiratory system, muscular system, excretory system or mind? No, and if that is the case, how can I say that I am the doer of karma?

What karma can you perform? You do not even know what happens to food when it goes into your stomach or how faeces are formed. How do you think? Can you explain the thought process? You can only explain thinking in terms of modern psychology, which is imperfect. Thinking is a process that is going on within you. Who is doing it? Can you explain what understanding is? How is it happening? So how can you say you are the master of the situation? You are not the master of any situation, even of your own body. So first of all you have to discover who is the master of this body, mind, perception, recognition? Who is the master of your life?

How were you born? For nine months you lived in your mother’s womb. The same is true for all creatures – cows, donkeys, snakes, chickens. A foetus is conceived, it is born, it grows, it dies. You were formed in the womb in exactly two hundred and seventy days. You did not make this law, nor did your father, mother, grandfather or grandmother. Therefore, you have to know who is the controller of the situation, the sutradhara. When you set out to find the sutradhara, only one word appears before you – God. You can also say Rama or Govinda because that is the name you have given Him, although in reality He has no name.

Do a little bhajan and kirtan. First bhajan and then kirtan. Always pray to God. He will guide you. Man comes into life only for a short time, either as a guru or as a teacher. Nothing will work if God does not wish it. I don’t know of any way to influence him. I have no approach. If I am able to

get that approach I will help you later. Again Kakabhushundi says to Garuda:

do – *Sevaka sebya bhāva binu bhava na taria uragāri,
Bhajahu rāma pada pañkaja asa siddhānta bicāri.
Jo cetana kahañ jaṛa karai jaṛahi karai caitanya,
Asa samartha raghunāyakahi bhajahiñ jīva te dhanya.*

O enemy of serpents,
No one can cross the ocean of the world
Without the attitude of master and servant.
With this thought in your mind,
Remember the lotus feet of Rama.
Blessed are those who remember Rama,
Who is capable of transforming
The animate into the inanimate.

(UK do 119)

Destiny versus human endeavour

I used to think that destiny could be arrested by human effort, but now, gradually, as I am going deeper and deeper into it, I realize that destiny cannot be arrested or changed. Even God Himself does not interfere with it. This has been written clearly in the shastras. In Balakanda of *Ramacharitamanas*, Shiva tells Parvati:

Live as Rama has kept you,
It is of no use racking your brain over it.

This is the preaching of the saints, but we talk a lot of nonsense in this regard. There is a law unto everything. Flora and fauna, insects and worms, animals and human beings, planets and worlds are created according to its codes and I have not seen even the slightest variation or lapse in its operation. All phenomena: birth, death, karma, the sciences of alchemy, physics, chemistry and botany tell us that these laws are very accurate. The reactions are unfailingly predictable. The sun, moon and their eclipses have laws. I had given it a lot of thought in my childhood and early days.

I thought that man could regulate the course of life, that he could change his destiny. But today, when I think about life, I feel that destiny is truth and man must accept it.

God's grace

Spiritual life is difficult. Few people can make it. If spiritual life was easy, thousands and thousands would have reached the pinnacle of spiritual life, but nobody has. Everybody should try on his own. Sometimes God will be gracious to you. Who knows?

*Kabahuṁka kari karunā nara dehī
Deta īsa binu hetu sanehī,
Nara tanu bhava bāridhi kahuṁ bero
Sanmukha maruta anugraha mero.*

Sometimes God, out of mercy,
And without any reason for his affection,
Bestows a human body on someone.
The body of a man is like a ship,
Crossing the ocean of the world,
And the grace of God becomes a favourable wind.

(UK after *do* 43)

A thorn has to be removed by a thorn. If a thorn is lodged in your body, use another thorn to remove it. In the same way, remove rubbish by rubbish. You may ask your guru or somebody else to remove your rubbish for you, but, in this way, you are only adding more to your waste bin. That is why your rubbish basket is always full. The municipality removes the old rubbish, but the new garbage accumulates again. When God's grace is there, all the rubbish of life is removed instantly, just as sheets and sheets of darkness are removed by the first rays of the sun.

*Prema bhagati jala binu raghurāī
Abhiantara mala kabahuṁ na jāī,*

(UK after *do* 48)

*do – Binu satasaṅga na hari kathā tehi binu moha na bhāga,
Moha gaeñ binu rāma pada hoi na dṛṛha anurāga.*

O Lord, without the water of love and bhakti,
The inner filth can never be cleansed.
Without satsang,
No talk of God is possible.
Without spiritual discourse,
Delusion is not removed.
Unless there is an end to delusion,
Intense love at the feet of Rama is never possible.

(UK *do* 61)

Samskaras from many different births will vanish or subside only with the Lord's grace. However long you work at removing your rubbish, you will not be able to do it. Nothing is possible without divine grace. If you think you can remove your rubbish, that is ego. You are speaking the language of ego. How can you remove it? First of all, you do not know what is rubbish and what is not. Sometimes you may be throwing away the diamonds and keeping the stones, because you do not know the difference between them. What is rubbish? What are you going to remove? You do not even have the discrimination to know what is true and what is false.

Therefore, leave it to God. Try to attain His grace through prayer, remembrance and satsang. The first sadhana is satsang, where there is talk about God, about spiritual life or where there is singing of bhajan and kirtan. This helps you purify yourself and your inner environment. Satsang must be compatible with your inner environment. Everything is written in the shastras, or scriptures. Nothing happens without God's grace. Whatever I received was through God's grace, not my own. God's grace is required. You need His grace, and in order to receive His grace, you have to be innocent, like a child.

Heart of a child

I have decided once and for all to tell the people that they have to be a light unto themselves. You have to be a light unto yourself. It is of no use knocking at my door. The most innocent person, who does not know the ABC of spiritual training, can get realization at any time, if he wishes. No qualifications are required. You do not have to be truthful, celibate or sincere. You do not have to be Christian or Hindu, or put on a sacred thread.

Darshan of God can be had by anyone, anytime, anywhere. For God's grace you do not have to qualify yourself. Many great, truthful, honest and pure people have missed the bus. Rama himself says in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Aba sunu parama bimala mama bānī
Satya sugama nigamādi bakhānī,
Nija siddhānta sunāvauṇ tohī
Sunu mana dharu saba taji bhaju mohī.*

*Mama māyā sambhava saṁsārā
Jīva carācara bibidhi prakārā,
Saba mama priya saba mama upajāe
Saba te adhika manuja mohi bhāe.*

*Tinha mahaṇṇ dviija dviija mahaṇṇ śrutidhārī
Tinha mahuṇṇ nigama dharama anusārī,
Tinha mahaṇṇ priya birakta puni gyānī
Gyānihiu te ati priya bigyānī.*

*Tinha te puni mohi priya nija dāsā
Jehi gati mori na dūsari āsā,
Puni puni satya kahuṇṇ tohi pāhīm
Mohi sevaka sama priya kou nāhīm.*

Now, listen to what I say,
Which is highly pure, true and simple,
As has been described in the Vedas.
I am telling you of my principles.
Listen and bear them in mind.

And remember me, abandoning all else.
 This world has been created by my illusion,
 Along with all the beings, sentient and insentient.
 They are all of different categories.
 Among them are the twice born
 And among the twice born
 Are those who know the Vedas.
 Among them also are those who live
 According to the Vedas and Dharma.
 Even among those who are detached and wise,
 The specially wise are dearer to me.
 But my servants, who have no hope
 Except in me, are dearest to me.
 I tell you truly, again and again,
 That no one is dearer to me than my devotees.

(UK after *do* 85)

He who has the heart of a child receives God's love. God's grace is for the one who is simple as a child, who considers toys to be real, the moon to be cheese, who marries his dolls and starts crying when one doll is broken. God's grace is for those with childlike innocence. God is not a matter of intellect. On that basis, you will fail for centuries, for thousands of lives. God is captivated by *bhavana*, feelings.

This is not the *bhavana* of an academic or an intellectual person. It is the feeling you have when you throw away all your superiority and ego and say, "I am not an academic, a scientist, an author, a teacher of so many disciples, a mahant, or a pontiff. No, I am nothing! Who am I? Five feet two inches tall – one heart attack and *Hari Om Tat Sat!*" A man dies after falling from a rickshaw, yet he thinks he is great. He is so egotistic, so full of pride and vanity. One may engage his vanity before others, but he has to go like a child without any clothes before God. And I don't mean that you leave your pants on. The Lord himself has said:

*Sunu muni tohi kahaurñ saharosā
 Bhajahim je mohi taji sakala bharosā,*

*Karauṁ sadā tinha kai rakhavārī
Jimi bālaka rākhai mahatārī.*

O sage, listen to Me.
I am telling the truth firmly.
Those who remember Me,
Abandoning all supports,
I care for them always in the same manner
As a mother cares for her children.

(ARK after *do* 42)

Become simple-hearted like a child, and then you will receive God's blessings. If you think that becoming a tyagi, a tapasvi, being charitable and dharmic is the way to God, you may find you are wrong.

Firstly, God can be reached only by love. There is no other way. Secondly, God will meet you only if He wishes, not by your wish. You must remember this. God is approachable only through love and devotion. He will reveal Himself only if He wants to, not because you have tried all the methods.

*Komala cita ati dīnadayālā
Kārana binu raghunātha kṛpālā,*

Rama is so soft-hearted
And kind to the poor,
That He shows mercy
Even without being asked for it.

(ARK after *do* 32)

There is no method. All the methods written about in the Bible, the *Bhagavad Gita* and Upanishads are just said because we have to do something. But actually, nothing except bhakti is necessary in order to find God.

The simple person, who does not use his head too much, finds God very soon. God gives darshan easily to people who have the heart of a child. Those who are adult at heart, who are intellectual and talk about the shastras and knowledge,

do not reach God. It is not even essential to be a good person to reach God. It becomes essential to be good for social reasons, otherwise there would be riots and terrorism. To get God, it is simply necessary to learn to love. That is all.

Only Rama knows the ethics of love.

Leaving aside all the relations

Rama always prefers the relation of love.



10

Song Divine

God's name for this century

Suffering on account of not remembering the Lord has been defined in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Kaha hanumanta bipati prabhu soī
Jaba tava sumirana bhajana na hoī,*

O Lord, said Hanuman,
Whenever I do not remember Thee
Or recite Thy name
That is the period of my distress.

(SK after *do* 31)

Only God's name, bhajans and kirtan are left for this century, because no one can perform yajna, not even saints and sages. Saints and sages of this era also belong to society, they have not come from heaven. You must understand that the saints and sages of today cannot do penance as they did in the time of old. After just one day of fasting, they start complaining of gastric acidity! If their head aches even a little, they call for the doctor. The qualities of asceticism are not present. In this age, renunciation, penance, fasting and yoga are not suitable paths to reach God; only faith in God and remembering His name can help you. If you lack faith and belief, you cannot approach God. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas has also said:

In Kali Yuga there is no need of yoga,
Yajna, japa, austerity, fasting or worship.
The only dependable means is faith
And remembrance of the name of Lord Rama.

In this age, if man wants to be liberated from the path of suffering, he has to think about an alternative means. There is pleasure in bhoga, but it is also possible to find an alternative method of achieving pleasure. Still we do not leave bhoga. Singing bhajans is an alternative to bhoga. You experience immense pleasure through singing bhajans. If you establish a relationship with God and secure that relationship with Him, be it love, submission or devotion, that gives pleasure. If you can experience pleasure in *bhagavat bhajan*, why choose the path of suffering which is the path of bhoga? In order to turn man away from the path of bhoga, there is only one alternative and that is bhakti. God has made me understand that. It has been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

Is there anything more valuable,
That devotion to Rama,
Whose glory the saints sing,
And the scriptures and Puranas praise?
The sole aim of human birth is
Abandoning desire and remembering Lord Rama.

Almost all westerners love kirtan, japa and meditation. Whenever I visited the West, particularly Australia and Greece, we would have kirtan for hours. It is really true that in this Kali Yuga, doing kirtan to God will give you everything. Tulsidas has written very nicely in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Kalijuga kevala hari guna gāhā
Gāvata nara pāvahinī bhava thāhā.*

*Kalijuga joga na jagya na gyānā
Eka adhāra rāma guna gānā,
Saba bharosa taji jo bhaja rāmahi
Prema sameta gāva guna grāmahi.*

*Soi bhava tara kachu saṁsaya nāhīm
Nāma pratāpa pragaṭa kali māhīm,
Kali kara eka punīta pratāpā
Mānasa punya hohīm nahīm pāpā.*

do – *Kalijuga sama juga āna nahīm jauīm nara kara bisvāsa
Gāi rāma guna gana bimala bhava tara binahīm prayāsa*

In Kali Yuga, people sound
The depth of the world ocean
Only by singing in praise of Hari.
In Kali Yuga, neither yoga nor yajna
Nor true knowledge avails.
There is only one support
Just sing the name of Rama.
Those who, repeating the name of Rama,
Renounce all other hopes,
And chant His praise with devotion,
Cross the world ocean without doubt.
The glory of the Name sanctifies Kali Yuga,
For virtues are counted, not faults.
No age compares with Kali Yuga,
Provided one has faith.
By devotedly counting
The impeccable virtues of Rama,
One crosses the world ocean.

(UK before do 103)

Lord Shiva and Rama

One day, while I was reciting the *Ramayana* a certain line gave me an idea. The idea was to lure Lord Shiva with the bait of Rama's name, because the *Ramayana* says that Shiva loves the name of Rama so much that he is sure and certain to drop in wherever Rama's name is being chanted. Similarly, if you take up the name of Shiva, Lord Rama is pleased. So, in Deoghar we chant the name of Rama and in Ayodhya *Om Namah Shivaya* is chanted.

I became old doing japa, austerities, anusthana, self-control, brahmacharya, and so on, but achieved nothing. Whatever I gained was only superficial. The real gain is to have darshan of Lord Shiva. I wondered how I could have Lord Shiva's darshan. I thought of two possible ways. One was to have my eyes operated upon for cataracts. As long as there is a cataract, even if Lord Shiva stands directly in front of you, you will not see him.

Everybody has the same problem. It is just possible that at this very moment he is present here, but can you see him? No. Whatever direction you move your eyes in, it is of no use because the eyes have cataracts. In the *Ramayana* it is called an error in perception. For the last six or seven years I have been sitting here undergoing an eye operation. Now is the time to see whether it has been a success or a failure. Only God will know.

I thought, Lord Rama, too, is happy in the month of Marga Shirsha. He was married in this month and marriage is a happy occasion, a joyful celebration. Marga Shirsha is the most sacred of the twelve months. The *Bhagavad Gita* also considers this to be one of the best months. Thus I considered all sides, calculated all the factors and planned this festival. It is not a convention, a program or a fair. It is like this: you sing Rama's name and, as Lord Shiva descends, you catch a glimpse of him. Remember, that you may read and recite the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, do pooja or any other form of worship, but as long as the atmosphere is not purified and rendered suitable for his darshan, it is of no use. Life without darshan of Lord Shiva is incomplete.

When Swami Nirnanjan asked me, "What are we going to do this year?" at first I said, "Not another program is too much for me! I am not going to repeat the same mistake of falling from the frying pan into the fire, from Munger to here! I left Munger for solitude. I don't want crowds!" But then this idea came to me while reading *Ramacharitamanas*.

I am a regular reader of *Ramacharitamanas*, not the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, but the *Ramacharitamanas* of Tulsidas,

which was written four or five hundred years ago. Tulsidas was an orphan. His mother died five days after giving birth and he roamed around like a beggar. His book has stirred the souls of millions and millions in this country and given a complete expression, a new definition of Rama. There I came across this reference. Lord Shiva is speaking to Parvati, his consort, and he says, "Parvati, wherever the name of Rama is repeated, I must visit that place."

Therefore, *seva*, service, of Lord Shiva means service of those people who are deprived, miserable and destitute. *Panchavaktram* and *trinetrām*, five-headed and three-eyed, is his form. Yogis pine and yearn for darshan of this form.

The Ganga on top of his head,
The serpent garlanding his neck,
Broad-browed, three-eyed,
Smeared in white,
Such is Shivashankara,
The consort of Girija.

This form of the Lord is even beyond the reach of yogis, but we can see him embodied in suffering humanity. This is the possibility in Kali Yuga. All of you who aspire to have the experience of Lord Shiva should try to remember that he will be seen in a decrepit form, in people who are poor, who are suffering from disease, who are totally helpless. It is easy to see God in a temple with five heads and three eyes, but it is hard to see God among the poor. Everybody wants to see God only in the *mandir*, the temple, but you should seek Him among the poor.

Therefore, this month is a long session of worship. If you want to invite Lord Shiva, chant the name of Lord Rama who lives in Ayodhya. If you want to lure Rama to yourself, worship Shankara. They worship each other; they are mutual devotees. Lord Shankara always worships Lord Rama. This is his weak point, his secret, the one way to entice him into giving his darshan.

Ultimately, in the evening of my life I found the trick. I was reading *Ramacharitamanas*, which I have been reading for years, and I read that *Rama* is the shabda mantra which Lord Shiva gives initiation into. Bhagavan Shiva has formed the shabda mantra which is one word, *Rama*. That Rama is not the denizen of Ayodhya, the indweller of the heart, the creator of the world or the transcendental Rama alone. He is the total combination of all the four Ramas enumerated above. I read in *Ramacharitamanas*, “Repeat Rama’s name and Lord Shiva will attend, he will come and listen.”

Shabari

Shabari was a tribal lady. Her guru told her that one day Rama would come to her doorstep. Hearing this, she was so overwhelmed with joy and happiness that initially she could not say anything. But then she asked certain questions: “I am by caste one of the downtrodden. How can I touch and worship the feet of Sri Rama? I have never performed any acts of charity. I have never taken a bath in the river Ganga to purify myself. I have never had darshan of any god or goddess. I have never been to a temple or on a pilgrimage. How can I, a downtrodden one, deserve to have darshan of the Lord?” These were the questions that Shabari put to her guru.

God’s feet touch everything and everywhere. God is present everywhere. You don’t have to be born into a high caste, you don’t have to be a sannyasin or a good person. To reach God you need neither a certificate nor virtue. Whatever you are, whether a thief, a robber, a dacoit, a rascal, a drunkard, Hindu or Muslim, virtuous or debauched, the Lord’s feet are available to everybody. Only one thing is necessary and that is intense love for God. What is the dearest thing in this world? By what means can you forget yourself? That is the only requirement. If only you could have this intense love for God in your heart, that would be enough.

You have the example of Shabari, but the best example is sitting in front of you right now. Who could be more vicious

and covetous than me? I am not a simple, virtuous man. I have twisted the heads of the smartest guys. Not a single habit of mine is good. I was not born into a Brahmin family. I was born into a family that considered drinking, non-vegetarian food and even womanizing to be acceptable. But I always thought of one thing only – how I could set all that aside and just remember the name of God. Let all eating, drinking and sleeping go to hell.

Power of the name

All the mahatmas say that when you chant the name of Rama, your heart and inner mind becomes cleansed of all impurities. The name of Rama is a detergent, which washes away the dross from your mind. It is a fact that all who live in the world are stained by maya and worldly life. The wise man who enters a chamber full of soot does not expect to come out immaculate. You have to live in the world. There is no choice, because you know the dire consequences when you do not obey your inner compulsion.

While leading a material life, try putting the horse in front of the cart and it will run very well. Life runs smoothly when the mind is fixed on the Lord's name, like the fixation you have for your offspring, sickness, stomach ache, headache or injury. Just as that fixation becomes the focus of your attention and nothing else interests you, similarly, the name of God should become an obsession with you. Generally your total mind remains in the grip of worldly experience. However, when your mind is gripped by the Lord, your whole life is transformed, not only the external life, but the inner life as well. There is an external life of behaviour, action and reaction, and an internal life of thought, feeling, vibration and experience.

The name is not just a simple thing. The important things in life are small, minute, infinitesimal. An atom bomb is molecular, very small in size, but it can destroy the whole world. The Lord's name is called atma bomb. It can destroy the *asuri sampada*, the unholy powers, within you. It

can eliminate the maya, impurity, baseness, dross, fear and frustration that is defiling you from within. All saints and great souls have said this from time immemorial. Those who understood it found salvation and freedom. Those who listened to this teaching and followed it found happiness and bliss. Those who ignored and disregarded it were drowned in the sea of material life.

Hiranyakashipu

Hiranyakashipu sent his son, Prahlad, to school and a number of small children went with him.

When the teacher began teaching, Prahlad protested, saying, “Why are you teaching me all these worldly things? Just write the name Gopala on the slate of my heart. I cannot leave Rama Naam. I am not interested in any knowledge other than bhakti and the name of the Lord.”

The teacher reported the matter to Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu called Prahlad and reprimanded him, saying, “Prahlad, give up the chanting of Rama’s name and listen to me instead. I shall liberate you immediately.” Prahlad replied, “Why are you harassing me again and again when I have told you that I will never give up the name of Rama, who has created land, water and mountains, this whole world. If I give up the name of Rama, it would bring shame to my guru, Narada. You may drown me, burn me or kill me by any other means, but I will never give up Rama Naam.”

Hiranyakashipu flew into a rage. Drawing his sword, he charged at Prahlad, challenging his faith, “Let me see who will protect you now!” At that moment Narasimha, a monstrous creature, half-man and half-lion, came out of the pillar. He tore Hiranyakashipu to pieces and killed him instantly. That entity was God’s incarnation, who took this form for the sake of His devotee. Several times God has saved and uplifted devotees like Prahlad. Therefore, never give up the name of Rama. I have no other concern except the repetition of the Lord’s name.

Method and medicine

Bhakti means real love. If one loves God, that is bhakti. Anyone who loves God practises bhakti. Everyone can practise bhakti regardless of their religion. Bhakti is a relationship with God. Lord Rama furthermore says in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Mama guna gāvata pulaka sarīrā
Gadagada girā nayana baha nīrā,
Kāma ādi mada dambha na jākeri
Tāta nirantara basa maini tākēni.*

I am always under the control of that person
Who sings my praise with a rejoicing heart,
Whose speech is obstructed by intense joy,
Whose eyes are full of joyful tears,
Who is free from desire, anger and hypocrisy.

(ARK before *do* 16)

Yes, saying God's name is one way and serving Him is another. You can call it soap or sabun. Give it any name, it doesn't matter. It is, after all, language. In Hindi, we say sabun, the Spanish people say jabon, Italians call it sapone, and some say soap. The substance remains the same. The relationship between devotee and God should start with the name. After repeating the name, the feeling develops and that is bhakti. Name or mantra is a method, but actually it is your inner feeling which is important.

*Raghupati bhagati sajīvana mūrī
Anūpāna śraddhā mati pūrī,*

The bhakti of Raghupati Rama
Is a life-restoring medicine,
But its vehicle the bhakta
Is ever-mindful of utmost reverence.

(UK after *do* 121)

In this Kali Yuga, in this age, kirtan is as good as medicine. In *Ramacharitamanas*, it has been said:

In Kali Yuga the name of Rama
Is the bestower of all desired objects.
It is the benefactor in the next world,
And like father and mother in this world.
Karma, bhakti and discretion are useless.
The only dependable means is the name of Rama.
There is no other way to salvation,
Except the name of Hari in Kali Yuga.

In our scriptures it is said that the chanting of kirtan is the best means to ward off enemies. Lack of peace, restlessness of mind, is the greatest enemy of man. If the mind becomes quiet, the impossible becomes possible. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:8) the Lord says to Arjuna: "Fix your mind on Me alone; let your thoughts dwell on Me. You will hereafter live in Me alone, about this, there is no doubt."

Kirtan

The name of God, when sung together in a group, is called *kirtan*. All over the world people like kirtan. The Australian people do very nice kirtan. One enjoys it very much. Australian kirtan is full of life. Small children do kirtan together with the elders. Kirtan is the main sadhana of the Kali Yuga. Different Yugas have had different methods of sadhana like yajna, tapasya, tyaga, yoga, etc., but now, in the Kali Yuga, these methods are not common. It is very difficult to do all of them. The mind gets lost. Tyaga or tapasya make people sick. Yajna is so time consuming that there would be no time left for a job or business. So, in this Yuga, naam sankirtan is the most important sadhana. In Kali Yuga, the name of God is the only basis of existence. By constantly remembering the name, man can cross over the ocean of life to the other side.

This age is complex, full of tensions, and it is difficult to practise many sadhanas. You may practise asana, pranayama, neti and dhauti for your body, that is alright.

However, for God realization, for leading a divine life, all the other sadhanas have become redundant, because they are too difficult. The only sadhana left for us is singing the Lord's name. Tulsidas says in *Ramacharitamānas*:

*Sumiria nāma rūpa binu dekheṁ
Āvata hṛdayaṁ saneha biseṣeṁ.*

*Nāma rūpa gati akatha kahānī
Samujhata sukhada na parati bakhānī,
Aguna saguna bica nāma susākhī
Ubhaya prabodhaka catura dubhāṣī.*

do –*Rāma nāma manidīpa dharu jiha deharīṁ dvāra
Tulasī bhītara bāherahuṁ jaum cāhasi ujīāra*

If one remembers the name,
Even without seeing the form,
Love flashes in the heart spontaneously.
The mystery of name and form is beyond words.
It is delightful if understood,
But words cannot express it.
The name is a bridge
Between manifest and unmanifest.
It is an efficient interpreter,
Revealing the truth of both.
If you have a desire to enlighten
The inner and outer apartments,
Tulsidas advises you to keep
The jewelled lamp of the name
Of Rama on the tongue.
For that is the doorway
Between the inner and outer self.

(BK before *do* 21)

Repeat His name in melody, in harmony, with a lot of people, with your family members, for one hour, one and a half hours. Play a guitar, a mridanga or a harmonium, and just keep on singing.

Rama should not be taken as allegorical or symbolic. Rama is Bhagavan, Sita is Bhavani. They should be worshipped as God and Goddess. Do not approach them through your head. If you do, you will get inverted wisdom, like when you practise the headstand. Go to God through your heart and see him as Tulsidas has described him in his *Ramacharitamanas*. Tulsidas had a pure heart and a clear head. He had the darshan of God. We complicate the matter by trying to go to God through the intellect. Bhakti is the simplest approach. Bhakti means just attaching your mind to God. If you cannot do it, resort to singing his praises and repeating his names. Music and kirtan are the easiest means of reaching God.

In the *Ramacharitamanas* it is proclaimed, “Who will get the darshan of the Lord, who will have his mystic vision and who will attain liberation? It is the one who sings His name in kirtan.” The means is kirtan. The Lord, too, has names like Rama, Govinda, and so on. If the same name is sung and repeated again and again in a variety of melodious ways, it becomes kirtan. In this Kali Yuga the glory and power of kirtan is emphasized. It is also good to sing bhajans. It gives you knowledge of God because He is praised and described. The mind, too, is elevated, but if you want His mystic vision then the means is the magic of kirtan. In Uttarakanda of *Ramacharitamanas* it is clearly written what kirtan does in Kali Yuga. The Lord inspires us to sing His name. There is joy in it, but besides this there is total concentration. When the mind gets totally engrossed, when the atma and paramatma connect and become united, that is kirtan.

Naam kirtan

Naam kirtan is singing God’s name for one to one and a half hours, fast not slow, but with peace not noise. This is the real kirtan. This tradition of kirtan is ancient. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu developed and taught this concept. He used to say that the only path to salvation in this Kali Yuga is singing

the name of the Lord and nothing else. In *Ramacharitamānas* it has also been said:

*Rāma nāma kali abhimata dātā
Hita paraloka loka pitu mātā,
Nahiṁ kali karama na bhagati bibekū
Rāma nāma avalambana ekū.*

The name of Rama is the bestower
Of all desired things in this Kali Yuga.
It is like father and mother in this world,
And the greatest benefactor in the next.
Karma, bhakti and discrimination
Are not necessary in Kali Yuga.
The only reliable thing is the name of Rama.

(BK before *do* 27)

In Munger we used to have many kirtans, but I observed that most of the time during kirtan the dholak and other instruments made a lot of noise whereas they should only be used to give the beat. When kirtan is done there should be a change towards one-pointedness and shanti. I sing alone here, but singing alone is not naam kirtan. Naam sankirtan is when ten, twenty-five, thirty people sit down and sing slowly. Singing the story of God is also very important. In *Ramacharitamānas*, Lord Shiva explains the importance of the story of Rama:

*Rāma kathā girijā maiṁ baranī
Kali mala samani manomala haranī,
Mana kāmanā siddhi nara pāvā
Je yaha kathā kapaṭa taji gāvā,
Kahahīṁ sunahim anumodana karahīṁ
Te gopada iva bhavanidhi tarahīṁ.*

That man achieves fulfilment of his desires,
Who sings this story abandoning desires and deceit.
Those who listen to it and recommend it,
Cross this world-ocean like the footprints of a cow.

O Girija, I have described the story of Rama,
Which is able to alienate the filth of Kali Yuga,
And also to erase the defects of the mind.

(UK after *do* 128)

Chanting Ramacharitamanas

What need is there to understand the *Ramayana*? Do you need to understand rasgulla? Do you need to understand samosa? There is simply no need to understand the *Ramayana* because it has not been written by a poet. A divine soul was invoked within the person who wrote the *Ramayana*. When any great power says something through you, when any great power writes through you, it is called mantra. When any great power makes you speak, it is called a blessing, otherwise we are all the same human beings.

Whether you understand the *Ramayana* or not, whether you like it or not, whether the mind is diverted, distracted or confused, you sleep just as you used to sleep, so how can you miss doing the *Ramayana*? Everything goes on as usual through pain, distraction and depression. Do you miss any of your work? No, so why miss the *Ramayana*?

You say you don't get time, so take only ten or twenty minutes. Just read one verse. In every house one person can be given this duty. Just as it is the duty of the wife to cook the food, the duty of the man to earn and the duty of the grandmother to sort the rice, similarly the duty of reading one or two verses of the *Ramayana* should be given to one person. You will see that happiness, wealth, health and good samskaras will be maintained in every home through this practice.

Villagers should sing or listen to *Ramacharitamanas* daily. Don't tell me that you don't know how to read, because I am not asking you to read it. I am not even asking you to understand it. I am simply saying that *Ramacharitamanas* should be heard or sung daily in all village homes. That alone is sufficient.

Along with *Ramacharitamanas* you should also sing Hanuman Chalisa. Begin this tradition from today, if you

do not already do it. Family members of all age groups, including and especially the children, should gather every day and sing *Ramacharitamānas* together. Those who do not know the words or cannot read should just listen. It is so easy to sing *Ramayana*.

This practice will bring peace, plenty, prosperity and auspiciousness to your homes: the happiness of having children as well as having food to feed them, the happiness of labouring at your fields and reaping a good harvest, of keeping disease and disharmony away from your home. What happiness does one enjoy in the family apart from these? Tulsidas sings the glory of *Ramacharitamānas*:

*Ati hari kṛpā jāhi para hoī
Pāuñ dei ehim mārāga soī.
Mana kāmānā siddhi nara pāvā
Je yaha kathā kapaṭa taji gāvā,
Kahahim sunahim anumodana karahim
Te gopada iva bhavanidhi tarahim.*

charṇ— *Raghubarisa bhūṣana carita yaha nara kahahim sunahim je gāvahim,
Kali mala manomala dhoi binu śrama rāma dhāma sidhāvahim.*

One who is specially gifted by God
Treads this path of devotion.
The desires of his soul are fulfilled.
One who sings the glory of Rama without deceit
And those who recite, hear and assent to it,
Cross the wordly ocean as if it were
A small hole made by the foot of a cow.
Those who recite, hear and sing the story of Rama
Wipe out the stains of the Kali Yuga
And the impurities of their souls.
Then they ascend, without effort, to His abode.

(UK before and after *do* 129)

You should make a resolve to chant at least one *dohā*, one couplet, daily from *Ramacharitamānas*. It will bring happiness

and prosperity to your domestic life. You will receive the blessings of the saints and sages through chanting *Ramacharitamanas*.

To start with recite the Mangalacharan, the opening sloka of Balakanda:

*Varnanamarthasanghanam rasanam chhandasamapi.
Mangalanam cha kartarau vande vanivinyakau.*

Then chant the first soratha of Balakanda:

1. *Jo sumirata sidhi hoi gananyaka karibara badana.
Karau anugraha soi buddhi rasi subha guna sadana.*
2. *Muka hoi bachala pangu charhai giribara gahana.
Jasu krpam so dayala dravau sakala kalimala dahana.*
3. *Nila saroruha syama taruna aruna barija nayana.
Karau so mama ura dhama sada chhirasagara sayana.*
4. *Kunda indu sama deha uma ramana karuna ayana.
Jahi dina para neha karau krpa mardana mayana.*
5. *Bandaum guru pada kanja krpa sindhu nararupa hari.
Mahamoha tama punja jasu bachana rabi kara nikara.*

Thereafter, chant chhanda (verse 192) of Balakanda:

1. *Bhae pragata kripala dinadayala kausalya hitakari.
Harasita mahatari muni mana hari adbhuta rupa bichari.*
2. *Lochana abhirama tanu ghanasyama nija ayudha bhuja chari.
Bhusana banamala nayana bisala sobhasindhu kharari.*
3. *Kahu dui kara jori astute tori kehi bidhi karaun ananta.
Maya guna gyanatita amana beda purana bhananta.*
4. *Karunasukh sagara saba guna agara jehi gavahim sruti santa.
So mama hita lagi jana auragi bhayau pragata srikanta.*
5. *Brahmanda nikaya nirmita may aroma roma prati beda kahai.
Mama ura so basi yaha upahasi sonata dhira mati thira na rahai.*

6. *Upaja jaba gyana prabhu musukana charita bahuta bidhi kinha chahai.
Kahi katha suhai matu bujhai jehi prakara suta prema lahai.*
7. *Mata puni boli so mati doli tajahu tata yaha rupa.
Kijai sisulila ati priyasila yaha sukha parama anupa.*
8. *Suni bachana sujana rodana thana hoi balaka surabhupa.
Yaha charita je gavahim haripada oavahim ten a parihim bhavakupa.*

Then recite a doha, and finally the arati:

Arati sriramaayanaji ki kirati kalita lalita siya pi ki

1. *Gavata brahm;dika muni narada.
Balamika bigyana bisarada.
Suka sanakadi sesa aru sarada.
Barani pavanasuta kirati niki.*
 2. *Gavata veda purana astadasa.
Chhao sastra saba granthana ko rasa.
Muni jana dhana santana ko sarabasa.
Sara amsa sammata sabahi ki.*
 3. *Gavata santata sambhu bhavani.
Aru ghatasambhava muni bigyani.
Vyasa adi kabibarja bakhani.
Kagabhusundi garuda ke hi ki.*
 4. *Kalimala harani bisaya rasa phiki.
Subhaga singjra mukti jubati ki.
Dalana roga bhava muri ami ki.
Tata mata saba bidhi tulasi ki.*
- Om shanti shant shanti*

If you don't invest even fifteen minutes in your own happiness, peace and prosperity, then who will help you? Even God can't come to your rescue.

Ramacharitamanas is not only the most beautiful epic, it is also easy to understand. It is not necessary to study the book intensively to know about Lord Rama's life, his leelas, his inner nature and his true being. You can understand it as spontaneously as you talk about your child, your husband, your cow or your goat. Lord Rama is not a god who lives in the sky. He is here within us. He sits within me. It is very easy to be with Him. Reflect on Him constantly. The family will keep functioning. The train will keep moving. You can also eat peanuts, drink cups of tea and enjoy the journey. In the same way, remembering God's name should play a more prominent role in your life.

I offer my salutations

As far as I know this outer universe is only one level of manifestation. There are subtler universes than this, and there may even be a grosser universe than this. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Kakabhushundi talks about the many universes:

*Udara mājha sunu aṇḍaja rāyā
Dekheuñ bahu brahmāṇḍa nikāyā,
Ati bicitra tahañ loka anekā
Racanā adhika eka te ekā.*

*Koṭinha caturānana gaurisā
Aganita uḍagana rabi rajanīsā,
Aganita lokapāla jama kālā
Aganita bhūdhara bhūmi bisālā.*

*Sāgara sari sara bipina apārā
Nānā bhāñti sṛṣṭi bistārā,
Sura muni siddha nāga nara kinnara
Cāri prakāra jīva sacarācara.*

do – *Jo nahim dekhā nahim sunā jo manahūñ na samāi,
So saba adbhuta dekheuñ barani kavani bidhi jāi.*

O King of birds, listen to me:
In the belly of Rama I beheld

A cluster of multitudinous universes,
Filled with many strange lokas
Each more wonderful than the other.
Millions of Brahmas, Shivas and countless stars,
Suns and moons, innumerable lokapalas,
Gods of death and time immemorial,
Numberless mountains, oceans, rivers and lakes,
Endless forests, vast terrestrial planes
And many other varieties of creation.
I saw such marvels as I had never dreamed of –
How then can I possibly ever describe them?

(UK before *do* 80)

Who knows where it begins and where it ends? Which do you call the grossest and which the subtlest universe? There is neither the subtlest nor the grossest. To think about this is mind-boggling.

At a certain point in his evolution, man realized that the entire universe is permeated by Sita-Rama, God and his maya. I salute, I offer my prayers with folded hands, to everything in this universe, because the entire reality, right from Brahman, the cosmic being, to the minutest creature, the entire reality is permeated by Him.

Therefore, there is a very important chant in *Rama-charitamanas* which everyone knows:

*Siya Rama maya saba jaga jane
Mangala bhavana amangala Hari.*

After having realized that the entire universe is permeated by God and his maya,

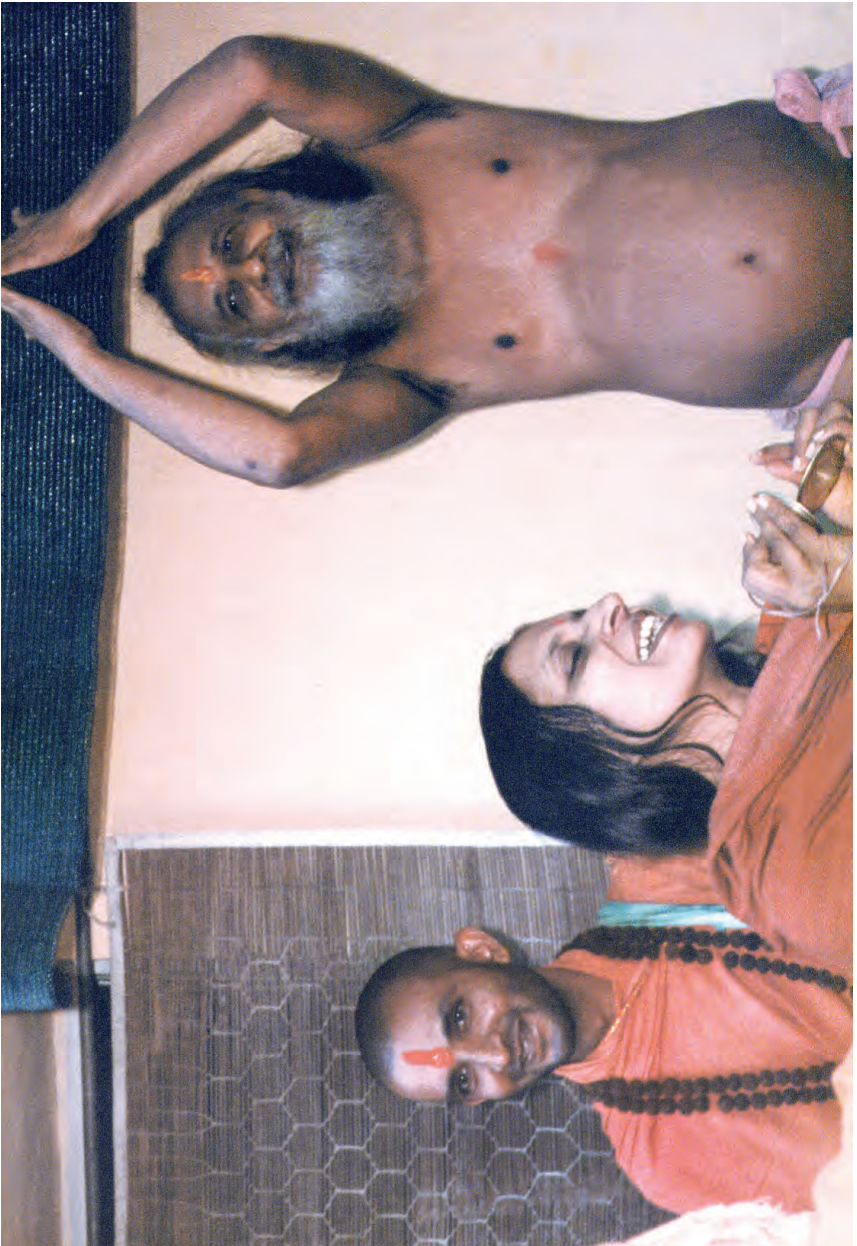
I offer My salutations with folded hands.

He is the storehouse of auspiciousness and the dispeller of inauspiciousness.

The bestower of auspiciousness and the eliminator of inauspiciousness is God's name.



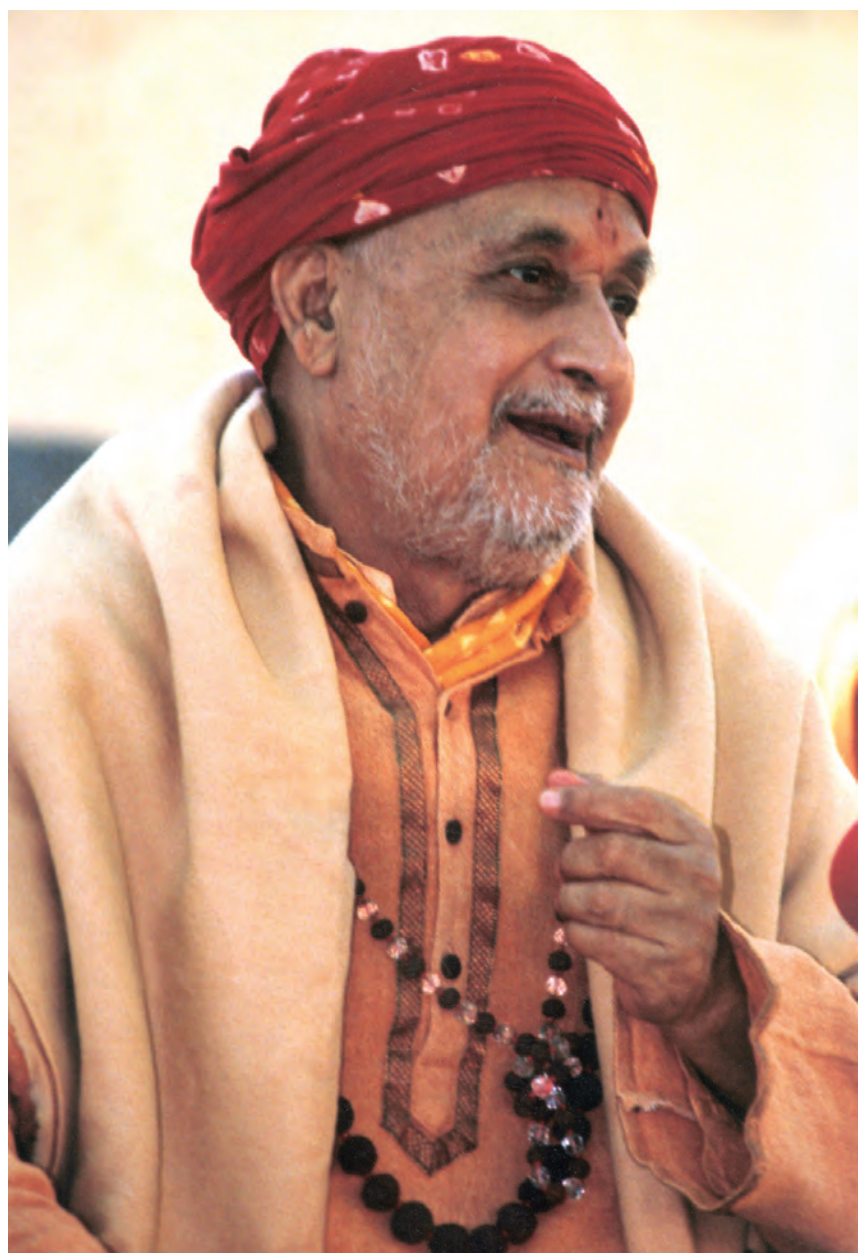
















Swami Satyasangananda (Satsangi) was born in 1953, in Chandornagore (West Bengal). She experienced a series of inner awakenings from the age of twenty-two, which led her to her guru, Swami Satyananda. From 1981 onwards she travelled ceaselessly with her guru in India and overseas, and developed into a scholar with deep insight into the yogic and tantric traditions as well as modern sciences and philosophies, leading to the writing of authoritative commentaries on classical texts.

She is an efficient channel for the transmission of her guru's teachings. The establishment of Sivananda Math at Rikhia is her creation and mission, and she guides all its activities, working tirelessly to uplift the underprivileged and neglected residents of the surrounding villages. She founded Sivananda Ashram in 2004 and Rikhiapeeth in 2006, where, as the first peethadhishwari, she is dedicated to implementing Swami Sivananda's three precepts of serve, love and give.

She was initiated as a Paramahansa sannyasin in 2007 and now she is travelling globally to spread the message of yoga and seva. Embodying compassion with clear reason, Swami Satsangi is the foundation of her guru's vision.



Satsangs on Ramacharitamanas is a compilation of talks given by Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati at Rikhiapeeth, India, from 1994 to 2001, in which he speaks on the Indian epic, its wisdom, beauty and poetry. His modern approach and language brings the ancient scripture to life and makes its spiritual instructions accessible to the reader of the twenty-first century.

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati found in the *Ramacharitamanas* the fulfilment of his spiritual quest and said that it contained the answers to all his questions. In these satsangs he shares his understanding and deep feeling for the characters, the plot and spiritual teaching of his beloved *Ramacharitamanas* by Tulsidas.

“*Ramacharitamanas* deals with life, its conflicts, frustrations and disappointments from birth to death. It gives the complete idea of the timetable of life.”



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ISBN : 978-93-81620-
64-9